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Letter dated 19 April 2016 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the issue of the ongoing challenges facing the sites for the protection of civilians established by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

They have requested the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide a paper containing an analysis of the challenges inherent to the sites, the lessons learned since the establishment of the sites and the continuing implications of the sites for the Mission and its mandate, including once the Transitional Government of National Unity has been established.

In this regard, they request you to provide that information to coincide with the conclusion of the work of the board of inquiry into the attack on the site at Malakal on 17 and 18 February 2016.

(Signed) Liu Jieyi
President of the Security Council



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Children and armed conflict**Report of the Secretary-General****I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2015, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2225 (2015). It highlights recent global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on grave violations committed against children in 2015. The main activities with regard to the implementation of relevant Council resolutions and the conclusions of the Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are outlined. In line with the resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the report include a list of parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel,¹ and the abduction of children.

2. All the information provided in the present report and its annexes has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations in which the ability to obtain or independently verify information is hampered by such factors as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. The preparation of the report and its annexes involved broad consultations within the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field, and with relevant Member States.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic approach on the issue, with an emphasis on humanitarian principles aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status.

¹ Under Security Council resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children

A. Trends and developments

4. Serious challenges for the protection of children affected by armed conflict continued throughout 2015. The impact on children of our collective failure to prevent and end conflict is severe, and the present report highlights the increased intensity of grave violations in a number of situations of armed conflict. Those violations are directly related to the denigration of the respect for international humanitarian and human rights law by parties to conflict.

5. Protracted conflicts had a substantial impact on children. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the five-year conflict has caused the deaths of more than 250,000 people, including thousands of children. In Afghanistan in 2015, the highest number of child casualties was recorded since the United Nations began systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009. In Somalia, the situation continued to be perilous, with an increase of 50 per cent in the number of recorded violations against children compared with 2014, with many hundreds of children recruited, used, killed and maimed. In a most troubling example, in South Sudan, children were victims of all six grave violations, in particular during brutal military offensives against opposition forces.

6. In Yemen, a particularly worrisome escalation of conflict has been seen. The United Nations verified a fivefold increase in the number of children recruited in 2015 compared with the previous year. This compounded a sixfold increase in the number of children killed and maimed in the same period. These alarming trends continued into early 2016.

7. Attacks on schools and hospitals were prevalent in 2015, linked to the increasing use of air strikes and explosive weapons in populated areas. Armed groups particularly targeted girls' access to education, although attacks on schools and hospitals were also carried out by government forces. Member States should consider, where necessary, changes in policies, military procedures and legislation to protect schools and hospitals.

8. The proliferation of actors involved in armed conflicts was a particular concern. Cross-border aerial operations conducted by international coalitions or individual Member States, especially in populated areas, resulted in highly complex environments for the protection of children. Indiscriminate aerial bombardments have hit medical and education facilities and crowded markets, causing child casualties. The many actors involved in hostilities posed challenges for monitoring and reporting and to the efforts of the United Nations to engage with parties to conflict to prevent child casualties.

9. In its resolution 2225 (2015), the Security Council expressed grave concern regarding the abduction of children in situations of armed conflict and requested those parties to armed conflict that engaged in patterns of abduction of children to be listed in the present report. Abductions continued to be perpetrated on a wide scale by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), with the number significantly increasing in Afghanistan and South Sudan.

10. The reporting period was marked by most disturbing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers and civilians and non-United Nations international forces. Sexual exploitation and abuse by those entrusted to protect civilians is particularly egregious. I have initiated a robust response to allegations against United Nations personnel, following the recommendations of the external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. I am pleased that the Security Council, through its resolution 2272 (2016), endorsed my decision to repatriate military or police units when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation or abuse by those units and asked the United Nations to gather and preserve evidence of incidents in peacekeeping operations. The measures represent important steps in ensuring that there is accountability for those who commit these atrocious acts.

11. Notwithstanding the significant concerns relating to the protection of children affected by armed conflict, progress has been made. The momentum generated by the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign remained strong. In particular, continued commitment by Governments towards their action plans was demonstrated in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar. The Sudan, the only campaign country without a written commitment, in March 2016 signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its security forces. Information on progress is included in the country-specific sections of the present report. In the light of the upcoming final year of the campaign, my Special Representative, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other stakeholders will increase their efforts to support the implementation of actions plans in place with government forces.

12. There was also strong engagement with a number of listed non-State armed groups. Engaging the plethora of non-State armed groups in existence is complex, and a multifaceted approach is necessary, taking into consideration the operational environments. Political dialogue and peace and ceasefire negotiations represent opportunities to reach out to parties to conflict regarding the protection of children. The early consideration of children's protection needs in negotiations is vital, and engagement with parties to conflict on issues such as the release and separation of children can also provide a starting point for discussions. The United Nations engaged strongly during the reporting period with non-State armed groups, both inside and outside peace processes, from the Central African Republic, Colombia, Mali, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Sudan. Progress in this regard is also reflected in the country sections of the present report.

B. Reducing the impact of violent extremism on children

13. Children have been significantly affected by violent extremism in recent years and were often the direct targets of acts intended to cause maximum civilian casualties and terrorize communities, including by depicting children as "executioners" or forcing them to be suicide bombers. The distribution of violent images and videos on social media placed the plight of children caught in the middle of these conflicts at the forefront of the world's collective consciousness. Acts of violent extremism are abhorrent and Member States have obligations to ensure that their responses comply with international law to ensure that civilians are protected from these groups. The Security Council has emphasized that efforts to

counter extreme violence must be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.

14. It is noted herein that some military responses against non-State armed groups perpetrating violent extremism raised challenges for the protection of children. In some cases, State-allied militia and vigilante groups have been mobilized and used children in support roles or even as combatants. Children caught in the middle of operations have been killed and maimed and their homes and schools destroyed, raising concerns about compliance with international law. When responding to violent extremism, Member States should ensure that their rules of engagement take into account that children may be living in areas under the control of armed groups or may be used on front lines following their abduction or recruitment.

15. As noted in my Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism (see A/70/674), dated 24 December 2015, purely military and security approaches have not proved effective in addressing violent extremism. Violent extremism does not occur in a vacuum. It is necessary to identify and address its root causes and catalysts, such as protracted conflict without hope of resolution, political grievances, the alienation of communities, the lack of good governance, poverty and the lack of education and socioeconomic opportunities. Action is required by individual Member States, regional organizations and the broader international community, including by mobilizing resources, building resilience and strengthening protective environments for children. A new and compounding challenge is the regular use of propaganda on social media to recruit children and young people. I urge Member States to strengthen programmes to prevent the recruitment of children through social media.

16. The effective reintegration of children formerly associated with groups perpetrating violent extremism should be a priority. However, in Member States' response to violent extremism, children are often systematically treated as security threats rather than as victims, and are administratively detained or prosecuted for their alleged association. Depriving children of liberty following their separation is contrary not only to the best interests of the child, but also to the best interests of society as a whole. This approach further complicates efforts to reintegrate children, given that it separates them from their families and can also lead to the creation of community grievances.

C. Children displaced by armed conflict

17. Armed conflict has resulted in forced displacement, with an ever-growing number of people fleeing in search of protection. In the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 4.8 million people have fled the country and 6.5 million have been internally displaced since the beginning of the conflict; nearly half of them are children. In Nigeria, as at the end of December, more than 1.8 million people had been internally displaced, including in excess of 1 million children, and more than 200,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries. In South Sudan, some 200,000 civilians, mainly women and children, remained in United Nations sites for the protections of civilians at the end of 2015. In Gaza, 44,479 children remain displaced as a result of the escalation of hostilities in 2014.

18. Those figures represent a very small fraction of the total number of children displaced by conflict, many of whom are unaccompanied or separated from their

families and caregivers during displacement. Those children are at a high risk and were victims of grave violations inside and around camps or other areas where they sought refuge. It is noted herein that, in contexts such as South Sudan, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, parties to conflict took advantage of the vulnerability of displaced and refugee populations to recruit children and commit other crimes, including sexual violence and abduction.

19. States of origin, transit and destination have a responsibility to ensure appropriate protection for displaced children and to avoid aggravating their vulnerability, including through equal access to health care, high-quality education and psychosocial support. The failure to accord priority to the rights and needs of children affected by armed conflict will only increase the cost of rebuilding society once peace has been achieved.

20. Conflict prevention must be the goal of the international community. Sustainable peace is the only way to reduce conflict-related displacement, and increased efforts should be made to identify long-term solutions that will reduce and mitigate the root causes of conflict. In the short term, action is urgently required to alleviate the plight of the many children currently displaced by armed conflict. I encourage Member States to respect the rights of displaced and refugee children and to provide them with the necessary support services, keeping in mind the best interests of the child.

III. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

Afghanistan

21. Children were disproportionately affected by the intensifying conflict in Afghanistan. The number of child casualties verified by the United Nations has risen by 14 per cent since 2014 and reached the highest number ever recorded. One in four civilian casualties in 2015 was a child.

22. The number of verified cases of recruitment and use of children more than doubled compared with 2014. A total of 116 cases (115 boys, 1 girl) were documented during the reporting period, of which 48 were verified. Thirteen verified recruitment cases were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces: five to the Afghan Local Police; five to the Afghan National Police; and three to the Afghan National Army. The majority of verified cases were attributed to the Taliban (20) and other armed groups (15). The Taliban continued to recruit children for combat and suicide attacks. There is continuing concern about allegations of cross-border recruitment of children and of use of religious schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan for child recruitment and military training by the Taliban and other armed groups (see S/2015/336, para. 21).

23. As at 31 December, the Ministry of Justice reported that 214 boys had been detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres on charges relating to national security,

including association with armed groups. In addition, 166 detainees arrested as children were being held at the Parwan detention facility for security-related offences; 53 of those were under 18 years of age. I am concerned about children being held in a high-security facility for adults for extended periods without due process, and about reports of the consistent use of solitary confinement for children.

24. The United Nations verified 1,306 incidents resulting in 2,829 child casualties (733 killed, 2,096 injured) — an average of 53 children were killed or injured every week. Of the casualties, 42 per cent (339 killed, 850 injured) were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, groups affiliated with ISIL and Hezb-i-Islami, and 23 per cent (177 killed, 471 injured) to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias. A total of 55 child casualties were attributed to international forces, the majority of which were caused by air strikes (21 killed, 20 injured), and cross-border shelling (3 killed, 9 injured). A third of child casualties (937) could not be attributed to a specific party. The leading causes of child casualties remained ground engagements (55 per cent), improvised explosive device attacks (19 per cent) and explosive remnants of war (13 per cent). The number of casualties relating to air strikes by Afghan and international forces almost doubled in 2015.

25. The United Nations received 11 reports of sexual violence, affecting nine boys and six girls. One incident involving a boy recruited and sexually abused by the Taliban in the northern region was verified. Concerns remain regarding the cultural practice of *bachah-bazi* ("dancing boys"), which involves the sexual exploitation of boys by men in power, including Afghan National Defence and Security Forces commanders.

26. Attacks on schools and protected personnel continued to be verified, including the killing, injury and abduction of education personnel. Of 132 verified incidents, 82 were attributed to the Taliban, 13 to ISIL-affiliated groups, 11 to undetermined armed groups, 1 to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and 23 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias; 2 incidents could not be attributed to any party. The emergence of ISIL-affiliated groups in the east had an impact on access to education and led to the closure of 68 schools, affecting more than 48,751 children in Nangarhar Province.

27. Verified attacks on hospitals and health personnel (125) significantly increased compared with 2014. In the attacks, at least 63 health-care personnel, including vaccinators, were killed or injured, 66 abducted and 64 intimidated and assaulted. A total of 75 incidents were attributed to the Taliban; 14 to ISIL-affiliated groups; 1 to TTP; 19 to undetermined armed groups; 14 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias; and 1 to international forces. For example, 49 medical staff were killed or injured in an air strike by international forces on the Médecins sans frontières hospital in Kunduz on 3 October.

28. In a positive development, in May, the Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration, aimed at protecting education facilities from military use during conflict. The use of schools by parties to the conflict continued, however, with 24 cases attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and 11 to armed groups (Taliban (4), ISIL-affiliated group (7)). The United Nations also verified 10 incidents of military use of hospitals.

29. The verified number of children abducted more than tripled compared with 2014. A total of 92 children (74 boys, 4 girls and 14 of unknown sex) were abducted in 23 incidents, including incidents linked to the killing of seven children and sexual violence against a child. The abductions of 69 children were attributed to the Taliban (two killed), 3 to ISIL-affiliated groups (all killed) and 12 to undetermined armed groups. An incident involving eight children remains unattributed.

30. The United Nations received reports of 93 incidents of denial of humanitarian access (75 verified). Humanitarian personnel were abducted (100), killed (9) and threatened and intimidated (14 incidents), while five humanitarian convoys were attacked. Of the verified incidents, 76 (78 per cent) were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, and 10 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias, while 7 cases could not be attributed.

31. The United Nations welcomes the measures taken by the Government in meeting its obligations under the action plan, including criminalizing underage recruitment by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the endorsement of national age assessment guidelines and the inauguration of three new child protection units within Afghan National Police recruitment centres, bringing the total to seven. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice granted the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan unimpeded access to all juvenile rehabilitation centres.

32. In February 2016, my Special Representative visited Afghanistan. She commended the strong commitment of the Government and the important progress made to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, and discussed gaps and challenges to be addressed. Critical elements are the nationwide expansion of child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, the implementation of national age assessment guidelines in all Afghan National Defence and Security Forces recruitment and a general prohibition on child recruitment and use in the Child Law. I am concerned, however, about the lack of oversight mechanisms for Afghan Local Police recruitment, especially in the light of allegations of informal recruitment of children. Reintegration programmes and alternatives for children are also important, given that poverty is a driver of recruitment. Regarding the deprivation of liberty of children on charges relating to national security, I urge the Government to consider alternatives to detention and ensure that children are always treated in accordance with their best interests and juvenile justice standards.

33. Further analysis of the six grave violations is provided in my country report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, issued on 15 May 2015 (S/2015/336). The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopted its conclusions on Afghanistan in February 2016, and I urge all parties to take action to address the recommendations set out therein.

Central African Republic

34. There were significant political developments in the Central African Republic in 2015, including the holding of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in May, a constitutional referendum in November and the first round of presidential elections in December. A new outbreak of violence erupted in September between former Séléka elements, anti-balaka elements and members of the former Central African military, which critically affected children. A detailed account of the effects

of armed conflict in the country is available in my recent report to the Security Council, which covers the period from January 2011 to December 2015 (S/2016/133).

35. The United Nations documented 40 cases of child recruitment and use, more than half of which were by LRA (21) and over a quarter by the former Séléka faction, Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (13). Children were used as combatants, messengers, informants and cooks. Girls were also used as sex slaves. In addition, the United Nations documented the presence of an undetermined number of children manning checkpoints and barricades alongside armed individuals reportedly sympathetic or affiliated to anti-balaka and former Séléka elements, when violence erupted in Bangui in September. On several occasions, suspected anti-balaka elements used children as shields as they fired at United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) forces. Furthermore, the military leader of a former Séléka faction, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, acknowledged having 43 children in his group. The United Nations engaged with him for their release, but without further cooperation.

36. There was a fall in the number of documented child casualties compared with 2014, with 62 children killed and 185 maimed, mostly during the violence in September sparked by the beheading of a 16-year-old boy. The ensuing violence claimed the lives of 28 children and injured 31. Anti-balaka elements were responsible for killing 28 children and former Séléka factions for 8, while 26 children died in crossfire or in incidents involving explosive remnants of war.

37. Sexual violence remained prevalent, with 70 cases documented, although the number of verified cases significantly decreased compared with 2014. Incidents were mainly attributed to former Séléka factions, in particular UPC, but also to anti-balaka elements and armed individuals of Fulani origin. A small number of incidents were reported to the police, but did not result in investigation or prosecution.

38. In the context of already fragile education and health-care systems, 19 attacks on schools and 12 on hospitals were verified, the majority by anti-balaka and former Séléka elements (UPC and Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique factions). A nurse was killed in Bambari in March by anti-balaka elements who had accused her of spying. Two suspects were arrested and handed over to the police, but no action had been taken as at the time of writing (March 2016). Furthermore, 16 schools were used for military purposes, 14 of them by former Séléka factions. In a positive development, the Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration.

39. A total of 52 children were verified as having been abducted: 25 by LRA, 15 by anti-balaka elements and the remainder by unidentified armed men. More allegations involving LRA were received but could not be verified. While the children abducted by LRA were used as porters or looters or for sexual purposes, abductions by anti-balaka elements were mainly for ransom.

40. Humanitarian access remained a major concern, with 140 verified incidents affecting humanitarians. Unidentified armed individuals or alleged affiliates of anti-balaka and former Séléka elements, often for financial gain, systematically impeded the provision of humanitarian assistance.

41. The United Nations continued to engage with some former Séléka factions, local anti-balaka commanders and other armed groups. That interaction culminated

with the signing of an agreement by 10 armed groups on 5 May, on the margins of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation, to end and prevent the recruitment and use of, and other grave violations against, children. Since the agreement was signed, 1,446 children have been separated from armed groups and space has opened for the United Nations to discuss commitments to end grave violations, especially with a number of the former Séléka factions. With regard to the anti-balaka, the United Nations engaged with local commanders, which led to the separation of children.

42. In total, 2,679 children were separated from armed groups: almost 89 per cent from anti-balaka elements and 10 per cent from former Séléka elements. UNICEF and its partners developed community-based approaches to reintegrate the children.

43. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against children by MINUSCA military and police personnel were recorded, including four from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one each from Burundi, the Congo, Gabon and Morocco and two by unknown perpetrators. As at December, investigations were continuing regarding seven allegations, with one involving personnel from Morocco and one involving personnel from the Democratic Republic of the Congo found to be unsubstantiated. Three allegations were also reported against members of the Sangaris force and contingents of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic. Furthermore, many new allegations involving personnel of the Sangaris force and MINUSCA were received in 2016 and were being investigated at the time of writing (March 2016).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

44. The security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (Ituri, North Kivu and Tanganyika) remained volatile in 2015 and was marked by military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — FARDC) against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri (FRPI) and other armed groups. The situation also deteriorated owing to the activities of armed groups and intercommunal clashes. The United Nations verified 2,549 violations against children, a significant increase compared with 2014. Nearly 40 per cent were attributed to FDLR. Children took the opportunity of military operations to escape from armed groups, resulting in a spike in the number of separated children.

45. The United Nations verified the new recruitment of 488 children (26 girls), of whom 30 per cent were under 15 years of age when recruited. This is more than twice the number of documented cases in 2014. Of the recruitment and use, 89 per cent occurred in North Kivu, and almost half of the children were recruited by FDLR (219), followed by Raia Mutomboki (89), Nyatura (69) and other groups (111). In July, 10 boys who had been recruited in 2013 and 2014 were separated from FARDC and reported that they had participated in military operations in North Kivu in the year of their recruitment. The United Nations engaged with FARDC, which indicated that it had suspended the suspected commanding officers and initiated an investigation, which was continuing at the time of writing (March 2016).

46. FARDC handed over 139, and the Congolese National Police 8, children formerly associated with armed groups to the United Nations. Ten other children were handed over after they had been detained by FARDC, notwithstanding the two government directives prohibiting the holding of children for alleged association

with armed groups. Some had been detained for a few months, but one boy had allegedly been detained for more than a year. At the time of writing (March 2016), the United Nations had identified at least 22 children who were being held without charge in Angenga prison after being encountered in military operations.

47. At least 80 children were killed and 56 maimed, with most incidents occurring in North Kivu and Ituri. ADF (20), FRPI (19) and FDLR (14) were the main perpetrators among armed groups. A total of 29 children were killed and maimed by FARDC and 9 by the Congolese National Police. Fourteen casualties were attributed to military operations or clashes among armed groups and nine were the result of explosive remnants of war.

48. The United Nations verified 254 child victims of sexual violence. Armed groups were responsible for the majority of incidents, in particular FRPI (67), Raia Mutomboki (33) and Mayi Mayi Simba (27). FARDC was responsible for 68 cases, the Congolese National Police for 19 and the National Intelligence Agency for 2. A total of 42 FARDC and 11 Congolese National Police elements were arrested following the incidents.

49. Twenty-six attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (4) were verified. The Twa self-defence group destroyed 10 schools in Tanganyika Province in clashes with the Luba. The remaining attacks were perpetrated by Nyatura (4), FDLR (2) and other armed groups (5). Regarding hospitals, ADF was responsible for two attacks and LRA and FDLR for one each. Most notably, an attack by ADF on Eringeti hospital in Beni territory on 29 November resulted in at least 31 casualties.

50. Notwithstanding a directive issued in 2013 by the Ministry of Defence prohibiting the practice of military use of schools, 20 schools were used by FARDC. Following advocacy by the United Nations, however, 13 were vacated. Ten schools were also used by armed groups.

51. A total of 195 reports of abductions were received. Sixty-eight verified cases were attributed mainly to Raia Mutomboki, FRPI and ADF. Girls were reported to have been raped while in captivity, and some 40 per cent of the children are still missing. LRA continued to abduct children; 102 new reports were received in 2015.

52. Two cases of denial of humanitarian access by Raia Mutomboki were documented in Shabunda territory (South Kivu). In addition, at least 127 incidents of intimidation of and direct attacks on humanitarian organizations and staff were recorded in North Kivu.

53. Military pressure and radio messages encouraging children to escape contributed to 2,045 children being separated from armed groups, which is twice the number separated in the previous year. Children were separated from FDLR (891), but also from Raia Mutomboki, Nyatura, FRPI, Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka and other armed groups. Ten boys were also separated from FARDC in 2015. Six Burundian boys allegedly recruited in a refugee camp in Rwanda were separated. A report released by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in November² demonstrated the plight of girls associated with armed groups. In 257 cases, children associated with armed groups were separated from FARDC bases (Kitona and Kamina) far from

² MONUSCO, "Invisible survivors: girls in armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2009 to 2015", 25 November 2015.

where they had been encountered, which delayed and complicated family reunification. In response, the United Nations advocated adherence to agreed principles to separate children where they are encountered by FARDC.

54. Throughout 2015, the Government maintained its commitment to implementing the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012, including through the work of the President's personal adviser on sexual violence and child recruitment. In September, the Minister of Defence endorsed a road map outlining pending activities for the full implementation of the action plan. To accelerate the process, three new provincial joint technical working groups were established. The United Nations provided technical support and screened more than 17,000 FARDC troops. However, it remains a concern that FARDC may not be able to identify minors without assistance, as was the case with the children identified by the United Nations in 2015. It is important that, as part of the implementation of the road map, the standard operating procedure on age assessment, drafted in August, be adopted and implemented country-wide.

55. Efforts continued by the Government to hold the perpetrators of grave violations accountable. At least 68 individuals, including high-ranking officers of FARDC and the Congolese National Police, were arrested, with 37 receiving sentences of up to 20 years' imprisonment for sexual violence against girls. Moreover, in August, an FARDC officer was arrested for the alleged recruitment and use of children. Seven leaders of armed groups were arrested on similar charges, including the former FRPI leader, Justin Matata Wanaloki, alias "Cobra Matata".

56. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts to implement the action plan by institutionalizing procedures, adopting and disseminating the standard operating procedure on age verification assessment and sustaining its commitment to combating impunity.

57. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children involving members of MONUSCO military contingents from South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania were being investigated at the time of writing (March 2016). Two other incidents involving military personnel from Benin and South Africa were substantiated.

Iraq

58. Military operations against ISIL intensified, especially in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din. The governorates of Baghdad and Diyala witnessed the main concentration of ISIL attacks. The impact on civilians and civilian infrastructure was devastating. My report on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2015/852) provides information on the period from January 2011 to June 2015. Limited access, especially with the intensification of conflict, and fear of retaliation impeded the monitoring and reporting of grave violations. The figures presented below are considered to be underreported.

59. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 37 children (36 boys and 1 girl). Of the cases, 19 were attributed to ISIL (including 18 boys from Halabjah, Sulaymaniyah governorate), 6 to the Kurdish Workers Party and other Kurdish armed groups and 12 to groups under the umbrella of the popular mobilization forces. Cases of child recruitment by the popular mobilization forces, which since April 2015 have been under the authority of the Prime Minister, included the coercion of eight boys to

go to a military training camp and the recruitment of four boys who were killed while fighting ISIL in Bayji, Salah al-Din governorate. Another 174 incidents of child recruitment (169 by ISIL, 3 by the Kurdish Workers Party and 2 by the popular mobilization forces) were reported but could not be verified. Recruitment by ISIL was reported in the Anbar and Ninawa governorates, and child soldiers were portrayed in social media, including as executioners.

60. As at December, at least 314 children (256 boys and 58 girls), including 23 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, remained in detention on charges under the Anti-Terrorism Law (2005), including for alleged association with armed groups.

61. The killing and maiming of children remained the most reported violation. The United Nations recorded 268 incidents, resulting in 809 child casualties (338 killed and 471 injured). Of those incidents, 152 were verified, including the killing of 203 children (125 boys, 32 girls and 46 of unknown sex) and injury of 314 (182 boys, 96 girls and 36 of unknown sex). The majority (74 per cent) of child casualties were recorded in the second half of 2015, as military operations intensified in the Anbar, Ninawa and Salah al-Din governorates. A total of 63 per cent of casualties occurred during military operations and engagements involving ISIL, the Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces and the Peshmerga, tribal elements and the international coalition against ISIL. There were 76 recorded improvised explosive device attacks targeting public areas and Iraqi security personnel.

62. The United Nations received reports of sexual violence against girls, in particular against members of the Yezidi community and other minority groups, in ISIL-controlled areas. Specific cases of rape and sexual violence remained difficult to verify, however.

63. The United Nations documented 90 incidents of attacks on schools and education personnel (68 verified). The majority (62) resulted from continuing fighting in Anbar, and schools were targeted by improvised explosive devices in three incidents in Baghdad and Diyala. Teachers and students were directly targeted in 24 incidents. On 9 December, ISIL tortured and killed a female teacher in Ninawa for refusing to use the ISIL curriculum. Three schools in the governorates of Anbar and Salah al-Din were used for military purposes (two by ISIL and one by Iraqi security forces).

64. Ten attacks on health facilities were reported, of which seven were attributed to air strikes in Anbar. In addition, 26 attacks on medical personnel were recorded, with 18 staff killed, 10 abducted and 2 injured in the governorates of Baghdad, Diyala, Ninawa and Salah al-Din.

65. The United Nations received many reports of abduction of children, primarily by ISIL. In two incidents in June and September, more than 1,000 children were reportedly abducted by ISIL from Mosul district. In another nine incidents, 12 children (10 boys and 2 girls) were allegedly abducted by unknown perpetrators owing to family affiliations.

66. Incidents were documented of internally displaced persons being prevented from fleeing conflict to access safety and basic services. For example, in December, 1,600 internally displaced persons from Anbar were stopped from crossing the Bzeibiz bridge between Anbar and Baghdad and some were abducted, reportedly by elements of the popular mobilization forces.

67. In collaboration with the United Nations, the Kurdistan Regional Government established a task force on justice for children to follow up on children in conflict with the law, including those detained on charges relating to national security. I welcome the efforts by the Government to identify preventive measures to counter child recruitment by ISIL, but am concerned about continued reports of recruitment and use of children by the popular mobilization forces, which now fall under the Government's responsibility. I urge the Government to put in place age verification and screening, and to criminalize and ensure accountability for child recruitment and use.

Israel and State of Palestine

68. In 2015, the situation was marked by heightened tensions that translated into widespread violence, especially in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the second half of the year. The detrimental impact of grave violations and an increasingly violent and oppressive environment continued to mark the lives of children. Palestinian and Israeli children were affected by the prevailing situation of military occupation, conflict and the blockade.

69. In 2015, 30 Palestinian children (25 boys and 5 girls) were killed and at least 1,735 injured (1,687 boys and 48 girls), predominantly in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

70. A total of 27 Palestinian children (23 boys and 4 girls) were killed in the West Bank, almost double the number killed in 2014. Most of the killings took place in the fourth quarter of 2015. Twenty-five deaths were attributed to Israeli forces, one to Israeli settlers and one to both Israeli forces and settlers. The number of Palestinian children injured also increased, predominantly as a result of clashes with Israeli forces and military-led operations. In the fourth quarter of 2015, 121 stabbing attacks against Israelis were carried out by Palestinians, including minors. From October to December, 14 Palestinian children involved in or suspected of stabbing attacks were shot dead by Israeli forces. I have repeatedly condemned the stabbings and other attacks. In addition, a number of the incidents raise concerns about the excessive use of force and unlawful killing, given that there are indications that the children posed no imminent or immediate threat to life that would justify the use of lethal force. For example, on 25 October, a 17-year-old girl was stopped at a checkpoint in Hebron, searched and shot at least five times. The Israeli authorities alleged that she had attempted to stab a police officer, yet an eyewitness stated that she had held her hands in the air and had posed no threat.

71. Violence by Israeli settlers and related incidents involving Israeli forces resulted in the injury of 54 Palestinian children (45 boys and 9 girls), with 20 cases of direct injury by settlers. An 18-month-old Palestinian boy was killed by Israeli settlers in an arson attack on 31 July that also claimed the lives of his parents and seriously injured his 4-year-old brother. Two Israelis, including a minor, were charged in relation to the crime.

72. A total of 13 Israeli children (9 boys and 4 girls) were injured by Palestinians. An Israeli girl who had sustained critical injuries in 2013 in a car accident involving stone-throwing by Palestinians died of complications. Furthermore, it was reported that a 17-year-old Israeli male had been shot dead in November.

73. In Gaza, three Palestinian children were killed by Israeli forces. Two boys were killed near the fence with Israel and one girl was killed in an air strike. In addition, 65 boys were injured, predominantly in the access-restricted areas along the fence with Israel and at sea.

74. Limited information is available about the recruitment or use of children. The Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades reportedly ran a military camp for 25,000 children and young people between 15 and 21 years of age in Gaza from 25 July to 5 August. On 30 August, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine reportedly held a graduation ceremony during a camp for girls, which included training in weapons.

75. An increased number of Palestinian children were arrested and detained by Israeli forces and prosecuted by juvenile military courts in the West Bank. In East Jerusalem, 860 Palestinian children were arrested, including 136 between 7 and 11 years of age, under the age of criminal responsibility. The monthly average number of children held in Israeli custody, according to the Israel Prison Service, increased by 15 per cent compared with 2014. A worrisome development was the recommencement of administrative detention of children, which had not been used in East Jerusalem since 2000 and elsewhere in the West Bank since 2011. Between October and December, six children were placed in administrative detention by the Israeli authorities. The United Nations and partners continued to document cases of ill-treatment of children by Israeli forces during their arrest and detention in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

76. In the West Bank, attacks on schools and protected personnel, and a pervasive environment of violence, harassment and intimidation, continued to have an impact on children's access to education. The United Nations documented 283 incidents relating to education, including 96 cases of schools coming under fire during military-led operations and clashes, 46 attacks and threats of violence against students and teachers by Israeli security forces and settlers, and 62 instances of interference with education owing to the closure of schools or the arrest and detention of staff and students. In Gaza, of the 262 schools and 274 kindergartens damaged or destroyed during the hostilities in 2014, 96 per cent of non-United Nations schools, all United Nations schools and 65 per cent of kindergartens have been repaired or rebuilt through the assistance of humanitarian organizations and donors.

77. Ten incidents of interference with health care were documented in the West Bank, with half involving the Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem. Incidents included the forced closure of clinics, search-and-arrest operations and Israeli security forces entering hospitals to obtain files and interrogate medical staff, resulting in the disruption of medical services. In addition, the Palestine Red Crescent Society reported that more than 131 paramedics and volunteers had been wounded and 76 ambulances damaged while undertaking their work in the West Bank and that access by medical teams to sick and wounded persons had been denied or delayed by Israeli security forces on 70 occasions.

78. In my previous report (A/69/926-S/2015/409), I urged Israel to take concrete and immediate steps to protect children, schools and hospitals, in particular by ensuring accountability for alleged violations. Of the 190 cases of alleged violations of international humanitarian law during the hostilities in Gaza in 2014 referred to the Israeli Defense Forces Fact-Finding Assessments Mechanism, the Israeli Military Advocate General has indicted three soldiers for looting and theft. Investigations into

numerous incidents, including the killing of four children on a beach in Gaza City on 16 July 2014, were closed without criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

79. I am concerned that actions have been taken by the Government of Israel in 2015 that further restrict the rights of Palestinians, including children. For example, the Knesset passed temporary amendments to the Penal Code to increase the maximum sentence for throwing stones to 20 years, and the State Prosecutor directed that all prosecutors should seek the detention of suspects charged with stone-throwing until the end of legal proceedings. I also reiterate my concerns regarding the practice of punitive demolitions of the homes of Palestinians accused of attacking Israelis, which have rendered their families and neighbours, including children, homeless.

Lebanon

80. Children were affected by intensified clashes in the Bekaa governorate and the Ein el-Hillweh Palestine refugee camp, bombings in Tripoli and Beirut and violence along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic and the Blue Line with Israel.

81. The United Nations continued to document cases of recruitment and use of children by local and foreign armed groups, including of boys between 15 and 17 years of age who were sent to the Syrian Arab Republic. The majority of incidents were related to the Nusra Front; however, children were reportedly also recruited by other armed groups, including Hizbullah, supporting the Syrian government forces. Furthermore, the United Nations documented the recruitment and use of boys and girls between 15 and 17 years of age by Palestinian armed factions and other armed groups within Lebanon. Reportedly, boys were used to man checkpoints or as guards, while girls were used in support roles.

82. As noted in my previous report (A/69-926-S/2015/409), I am concerned that children are held in pretrial detention under military jurisdiction on charges relating to national security. Fifteen boys (between 14 and 17 years of age at the time of their arrest) were still detained as at the end of 2015.

83. The United Nations verified 14 cases of child casualties relating to explosive remnants of war in southern Lebanon (2 killed, 9 injured), stray bullets during Hizbullah mourning ceremonies (1 killed, 1 injured) and crossfire (1 injured).

84. During violence between armed factions in the Ein el-Hillweh refugee camp in August, six United Nations schools and two medical facilities were damaged by crossfire and four United Nations schools were used by armed elements.

85. I commend the Government on its intensified efforts to implement the workplan to prevent and respond to the association of children with armed violence in Lebanon, signed in August 2014. I once again urge Lebanon to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which it signed in 2002.

Libya

86. Protracted fighting continued in Benghazi, and sporadic armed clashes occurred in Ajdabiya, Darnah, Kufrah, Sabha, Sirte, Tripoli and the oil crescent. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIL expanded and gained territory in central Libya.

Access for monitoring continued to be restricted by insecurity, and United Nations international staff were located outside the country.

87. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups was reported. For example, groups affiliated with ISIL reportedly operated training camps south of Sirte, with a graduation ceremony for 85 children under 16 years of age reportedly held in December. It has been reported that children have been exposed to sexual violence during their association with armed groups.

88. At least 60 children were reportedly casualties of indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, air strikes, suicide bombings and crossfire, the majority in Benghazi. Summary executions of children were also reported, with groups affiliated with ISIL allegedly beheading a 17-year-old boy in Hawarah in May.

89. In Benghazi, 40 schools were reportedly damaged or destroyed, including through indiscriminate shelling. The United Nations also documented a case of military use of a school as a detention facility by the Darnah Mujahideen Shura Council. Attacks on hospitals and medical personnel continued. The Benghazi medical centre was shelled at least four times, and four medical personnel were reportedly killed on duty in an ambulance on 6 May. The abduction and killing of medical personnel by armed groups, including groups affiliated to Operation Karamah, was documented in Ajdabiya, Benghazi and Darnah.

90. In the context of the breakdown of law and order, there was a rise in the abduction of children by armed groups, militias and criminal organizations. For example, the body of a 16-year-old boy, reportedly abducted by militias affiliated with Operation Karamah, was found in Benghazi in December.

91. In June, an armed group believed to belong to the Magarha tribe abducted seven staff of a Libyan humanitarian organization; the whereabouts of the abductees remains unknown.

92. The United Nations engaged with the Constitution Drafting Assembly to include guarantees of children's rights in the draft constitution. I welcome the decision of the Zintan Municipal Council of February 2016 to release and reintegrate child soldiers, and look forward to its implementation with the support of UNICEF.

Mali

93. Notwithstanding the peace accord signed by the Government, the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in May and June, clashes between the parties in northern Mali continued in the middle of 2015. The period was also marked by an increase in violent extremist and asymmetric attacks. In total, 109 verified and 128 unverified grave violations were reported.

94. A total of 127 cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups were received, with 30 verified. In addition, 27 cases of recruitment and use of children by the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés were verified in March 2016 in Ineggar, Gao region, and 47 other alleged cases were received. As at 31 December, of the 32 children arrested on security charges, 4 remained in detention in Bamako and Koulikoro. The United Nations continued to collaborate with the Malian authorities to ensure the implementation of the handover protocol signed in 2013. In addition, it documented cases of 14 children held by armed groups.

95. The United Nations verified the killing of 12 children and the maiming of 39 during rocket attacks and crossfire, as well as by improvised explosive device attacks and explosive remnants of war. While the identification of the perpetrators was not always possible, CMA was reportedly involved in at least two attacks. In one incident, two boys were lynched, dismembered and burned by a mob on suspicion of being associated with armed groups and participating in an attack.

96. A total of 22 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children were verified, comprising 3 by the Malian defence and security forces, 1 by the Platform and 18 by unknown perpetrators.

97. Four attacks and threats of attacks on schools and protected personnel were verified, including one by CMA and one by the Front de libération du Macina.³ Following the killing of a village leader by the latter group in Dogo, Mopti region, reportedly for seeking the authorities' support after he had been told to close secular schools, the group threatened teachers in six local communes, leading to the closure of 93 schools. The number of schools used for military purposes by armed groups had dropped from 20 in 2014 to 7 by December.

98. The operational environment remained extremely volatile and targeted attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities contributed to the disruption of the delivery of assistance. In a verified incident, CMA forced an international medical non-governmental organization supporting two health centres in the Timbuktu region to withdraw.

99. In the light of increasing threats to education, the United Nations initiated a dialogue with the Ministry of Education on the protection of schools. Efforts to engage CMA on ending and preventing grave violations against children continued and steps were taken to develop an action plan with the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad. In October, the United Nations also assisted the Malian authorities in developing a separation and reintegration strategy for children. I encourage the Malian authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the peace agreement to dedicate attention to the rights and specific needs of children.

Myanmar

100. Conflict continued in Kachin and Shan States and the south-east between government armed forces (Tatmadaw) and armed groups. On 15 October, the Government and eight armed groups, including four listed parties, signed a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

101. The United Nations received reports of 217 cases of recruitment, of which 95 were verified. Five verified incidents took place in 2015, with three attributed to the Tatmadaw (those recruited were subsequently released) and two to the Kachin Independence Army. Twenty-six incidents verified in 2015 had taken place in 2014. Furthermore, the United Nations received seven reports of the use of children in support functions by the Tatmadaw, including two verified cases in Rakhine State. The Government indicated that action had been taken against 382 military personnel, including 73 officers, for failing to adhere to recruitment procedures. A civilian was also sentenced to a year's imprisonment for aiding underage

³ The Front de libération du Macina is an armed group formed in January 2015. Attacks in the central and northern regions have been attributed to it.

recruitment. Credible information indicates that children were recruited and used by armed groups; however, five reported incidents could not be verified owing to limited access to the areas. Reports of recruitment involved the Karen National Liberation Army, the Kachin Independence Army, the Shan State Army-South and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army in Kachin, Kayin and Shan States.

102. The United Nations documented three children held in military detention. Two were released after notification to the Tatmadaw and the other was returned to his regiment pending age verification. In addition, three children were reportedly detained at the battalion level and subsequently discharged.

103. The United Nations documented 37 incidents of killing and maiming (25 killed and 50 injured), of which 23 were verified and which resulted in the killing of 15 children and injury of 37. More than half of the verified cases were related to landmines and explosive remnants of war (10 killed and 24 injured).

104. The United Nations verified three cases of sexual violence against girls, aged between 5 and 10 years, by Tatmadaw soldiers. In a grievous case, an 8-year-old girl was raped by a soldier and died after being taken to hospital. The perpetrators were court-martialled for being absent from duty and intoxicated, and two were convicted of rape by civilian courts.

105. The United Nations received 11 reports of attacks on schools. Three verified incidents were attributed to the Tatmadaw, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and an unknown armed group. Six verified cases of military use of schools were attributed to the Tatmadaw.

106. Five incidents of abduction were verified, with three leading to the disappearance of 11 children, which were attributed to the Tatmadaw, and two incidents involving three children were attributed to the Kachin Independence Army. Additional reports of abduction by armed groups in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine States, including for recruitment and use, could not be verified owing to access restrictions.

107. The United Nations received two reports of humanitarian personnel being caught in crossfire during engagement between the Tatmadaw and armed groups. Humanitarian access to areas outside government control in Kachin and Shan States was reduced compared with 2014, owing to limited government authorization.

108. Positive steps continued to be taken by the Government to advance the implementation of the joint action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw, including training on age assessment in recruitment centres, increased access to military battalions and units for monitoring missions and monthly case review meetings with the United Nations for the verification of suspected child recruits. In 2015, 146 former child soldiers, including 28 still under 18 years of age, were released and reintegrated into their families and communities.

109. My Special Representative visited Myanmar in July. While acknowledging the progress made, she noted that gaps remained in the systematic prevention of and accountability for the recruitment and use of children. Criminalizing recruitment and use by both military personnel and civilians is critical. The passage of the revised Child Law, including a chapter on children and armed conflict and a corresponding penalties section, would be highly important. The enforcement of existing accountability mechanisms also needs to be strengthened for all grave

violations, including through legal clarity to ensure consistency in decisions, improved witness protection and follow-up of cases in civilian courts.

110. In September, Myanmar signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I strongly encourage its ratification.

111. My Special Representative engaged in dialogue with three armed groups listed in the annexes to the present report, to encourage the development of action plans to address the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations. The United Nations has pursued further dialogue with these groups, and one listed party, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army, is ready to sign an action plan. I urge the Government to allow the signing and implementation of action plans with listed armed groups, which is a critical component of its commitment to end the recruitment and use of children throughout Myanmar, in line with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitment made by signing the Optional Protocol.

Somalia

112. The period saw increased attacks by Al-Shabaab on the Somali security forces, government officials and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in addition to inter-clan clashes. In July, AMISOM and the Somali National Army resumed their offensive against Al-Shabaab. The national forces of Ethiopia and Kenya also conducted military operations. The situation resulted in a spike in the number of grave violations against children, with an increase of almost 50 per cent compared with 2014.

113. The recruitment and use of 903 children was documented, with 60 per cent of the cases (555) attributed to Al-Shabaab. In December, around 150 children were reportedly abducted for recruitment purposes from madrasas by Al-Shabaab in the Bay region. Of those cases, 26 (all boys) were verified by the United Nations. The Somali National Army also recruited a high number of children (218), who were used for various tasks, such as manning checkpoints. Recruitment was also attributed to clan militias (68), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (40) and Galmudug forces (17).

114. An increase in the detention of children for association with armed groups was documented, with 365 cases. The vast majority of children were detained by the Somali National Army (346), but also by Jubaland forces (11), Galmudug forces (6) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (2). Twenty-four boys were detained by AMISOM and later released. In a positive development, following engagement and advocacy by the United Nations, 79 children formerly associated with Al-Shabaab who had been held in rehabilitation centres were handed over to United Nations-supported non-governmental organization partners. At the time of writing (March 2016), however, dozens of children were reported to have taken part in an Al-Shabaab attack on Puntland and Galmudug and had been detained by the regional authorities.

115. A total of 474 incidents of killing and maiming were documented, affecting 753 children, and attributed to unknown armed elements (259), the Somali National Army (144), Al-Shabaab (138), clan militias (123), AMISOM (60), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (3) and other regional forces (8). Most incidents were related to indiscriminate gunfire or improvised explosive devices. The United Nations also documented six cases of children being executed by Al-Shabaab. Most incidents

attributed to AMISOM were caused by indiscriminate shooting in response to attacks by Al-Shabaab and during Operation Juba Corridor. For example, eight children were killed in two incidents in Marka district, Shabelle Hoose region, in July. In addition, 18 children were killed on 21 July in an air strike on a madrasa in Baardheere district.

116. The United Nations documented 164 incidents of sexual violence affecting 174 children, with the majority committed by clan militias (56), unknown armed elements (54), the Somali National Army (43), Al-Shabaab (15) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a and AMISOM (2 each). Eighteen cases of forced marriage by parties to conflict were also documented.

117. Attacks on 24 schools and five hospitals were documented. Al-Shabaab committed 15 attacks on schools, the Somali National Army and allied militias were responsible for 4 attacks, clan militias and unknown armed elements were responsible for 2 each and unidentified air forces were responsible for 1 attack, as mentioned above. Attacks on hospitals were committed by AMISOM (two) and Al-Shabaab, clan militias and the Somali National Army (one each). The attacks by AMISOM involved the looting of medicines. In addition, two schools were used by the Somali National Army, including one in the Shabelle Hoose region, which was vacated following engagement by the United Nations.

118. A pattern of abduction was observed. Numbers spiked compared with 2014. A total of 458 boys and 65 girls were abducted, with nearly 95 per cent by Al-Shabaab (492), but also by clan militias (14). Abductions were often used as a tactic for recruitment, but also for the purpose of sexual violence, including forced marriage. For example, parents reported the abduction of 45 children by Al-Shabaab from a madrasa in the Juba Dhexe region in August.

119. Twelve incidents of denial of humanitarian access by clan militias (seven), the Somali National Army (three), Al-Shabaab and unknown armed elements were reported. Humanitarian access to children remained extremely challenging and United Nations staff were targeted. Seventeen humanitarian staff were killed in 2015, including four UNICEF staff in a suicide attack by Al-Shabaab.

120. Regarding separation, UNICEF supported the reintegration of 749 children through community-based programmes. The United Nations also provided technical support to the Child Protection Unit of the Somali National Army. Joint screening exercises were conducted and 36 children were separated from militias in Kismaayo, as part of a vetting process before their integration into the Somali National Army. Efforts to provide the separated children with assistance were continuing at the time of writing (March 2016). In another positive development, the Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 1 October. I am, however, particularly concerned by the continuing recruitment and use of children and high numbers of Somali National Army child detainees. I call upon the Government to immediately separate all children from the Somali National Army in adherence with the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012 and to comply with international juvenile justice standards regarding detention.

121. The United Nations has engaged with AMISOM on the alarming numbers of killing and maiming of children committed by its forces. I urge the African Union and the troop-contributing countries to take all measures necessary to prevent

violations and ensure the protection of children, as well as ensure accountability by undertaking prompt and independent investigations.

South Sudan

122. Conflict continued throughout the country, with intense clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition) and their allied militias, primarily in Unity and Upper Nile States. A peace agreement was signed in August, but fighting continued, with mass displacement of civilians and severe repercussions on children. A total of 1,051 incidents affecting 28,788 children were documented, with 601 incidents in Unity State alone.

123. The United Nations verified 159 incidents of recruitment and use, affecting 2,596 children. Nearly 70 per cent were attributed to SPLA (110), other government security forces and allied forces, including the Cobra faction of the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army, which was integrated into SPLA in 2015. Recruitment and use was also perpetrated by SPLM/A in Opposition (19), Johnson Olony's armed group (11), the Arrow Boys (4) and the White Army (3). Children wearing military uniforms were spotted throughout the country, especially in the greater Upper Nile region, where they were used in direct hostilities and support roles. First-hand reports were received of children being ordered to kill civilians and loot properties in Unity State. Girls reported being gang-raped and used for sexual purposes. According to the United Nations in the Sudan, some 400 South Sudanese children were also recruited by SPLM/A in Opposition from the Kharasana refugee camp, Western Kordofan, in October.

124. The United Nations verified 131 incidents of killing and 59 of maiming affecting 480 and 128 children, respectively, a sharp increase compared with 2014. The majority were attributed to SPLA (160), including in Unity State, where soldiers and allied militias reportedly shot at and burned houses with children inside. Incidents were also attributed to the South Sudan National Police Service, SPLM/A in Opposition, Johnson Olony's armed group and other parties to conflict. Moreover, seven children were killed and maimed in four incidents in United Nations sites for the protection of civilians during exchanges of fire between SPLA and SPLM/A in Opposition. Explosive remnants of war also caused child casualties. A cross-border incident involving SPLA that killed six children and maimed five was documented by the United Nations in the Sudan.

125. A total of 103 incidents of sexual violence affecting 430 children were verified and attributed to SPLA and other government security forces. Most incidents were documented in Unity State. Boys were reportedly castrated and sexually mutilated, while girls who resisted rape were killed.

126. Ten attacks on schools by SPLA were verified. They entailed destruction, damage, looting or the recruitment of children. In an incident in Upper Nile State, 36 children were rounded up by Johnson Olony's armed group, a militia aligned at the time with SPLA, during an SPLA recruitment exercise. They were later released. Eleven attacks on hospitals and health facilities were also verified, with nine attributed to SPLA and two to SPLM/A in Opposition.

127. As at the end of December, 25 schools were being used for military purposes by SPLA and other government security forces (22) and SPLM/A in Opposition (1).

Thirty-six schools were vacated in 2015, mainly through advocacy by the United Nations and joint verifications with SPLA.

128. There was a dramatic upsurge in the number of incidents of abduction, with 79 verified incidents affecting 1,596 children. The main perpetrators were SPLA (67), the Arrow Boys (5) and SPLM/A in Opposition (4). The largest number of abductions was documented in Unity State. Most children were abducted for recruitment and use. Testimonies of rape while in captivity were also received.

129. A total of 277 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and included attacks on personnel, destruction of compounds and interference in the delivery of assistance.

130. The Cobra faction of the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army released 1,755 children in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area following advocacy by the United Nations. Children joined reintegration programmes and received support, but some boys were reportedly rerecruited. Since the group's integration into SPLA, the United Nations has been working with the SPLA Child Protection Unit to release all children.

131. Child protection provisions were included in the peace agreement signed in August, but United Nations engagement with the parties to conflict yielded few results. Other commitments to protect children were forthcoming, however, and, in January, South Sudan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On 26 December, SPLM/A in Opposition signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. I am, however, deeply concerned at the scale of violations affecting children and, in line with my call during my visit in February 2016, I urge the leaders of South Sudan to abide by their responsibilities to protect children. I also call upon all parties to turn their multiple commitments into action by stopping the violations against children and releasing the thousands of children from their ranks.

Sudan

Three areas: Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei

132. Clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) continued in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States and attacks against civilians were reported. The most recent round of peace talks between the two parties, convened in November, produced little progress. Intercommunal violence also occurred, including in Abyei. In addition, the period featured activities by armed groups along the border with South Sudan. Owing to access limitations, the United Nations was unable to verify allegations and figures may be underreported.

133. The United Nations documented four cases of recruitment and use of children by the Sudanese Armed Forces. As noted in my previous report (A/69/926-S/2015/409), cross-border activities by armed groups continued and two boys were recruited by SPLM-N from refugee settlements in South Sudan.

134. The United Nations documented 28 incidents of killing and maiming, mostly perpetrated by the Sudanese Armed Forces (16) and SPLM-N (6), affecting 43 and 38 children, respectively. Most incidents were caused by attacks on civilians by government forces and SPLM-N, aerial bombardment, shelling and crossfire. Two

were also the result of tribal clashes and explosive remnants of war. In addition, the United Nations documented the killing and maiming of four girls in a Sudanese Armed Forces aerial bombardment in South Sudan.

135. The rapes of four girls and one boy by Sudanese Armed Forces elements and aligned militias were documented. Sexual violence against children remained a grave concern and the numbers are believed to be underreported owing to a lack of access.

136. Seven incidents of attacks on schools (two), hospitals (three) and protected personnel (two) were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (two), SPLM-N (two) and unknown perpetrators. Two incidents occurred during clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and SPLM-N. For example, on 20 January, a hospital operated by Médecins sans frontières in the Nuba mountains was reportedly bombed by the Sudanese Armed Forces. A medical staff member and a teacher were reportedly killed in April in Western Kordofan by SPLM-N.

137. The United Nations documented the abduction of eight children, including five in Abyei, that occurred during Misseriya attacks on Ngok Dinka villages in January and March. The children were released and reunited with their families following engagement by the United Nations. Three other boys were reportedly abducted by SPLM-N, including two in South Sudan.

138. The Government continued to restrict humanitarian access, resulting in an estimated 165,000 children being deprived of immunization.

Darfur

139. The period witnessed continued confrontations between government security forces and armed groups, especially in the Jebel Marra area, which led to significant displacement. The situation, exacerbated by aerial bombardment and increasingly deadly intertribal clashes, resulted in grave violations against children.

140. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified the recruitment of four boys by the Sudanese Armed Forces in West Darfur, including one who reportedly participated in fighting between the Abbas faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Armed Forces in June. More allegations were received involving the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Government's Rapid Support Forces, which could not be verified. In addition, the United Nations documented the recruitment of six children by JEM from refugee settlements in Unity State, South Sudan. During her visit in March 2016, my Special Representative was given access to 21 children detained by the National Intelligence and Security Service since April and August 2015 for their alleged association with JEM. The children had allegedly been recruited in Southern Kordofan and South Sudan and used in combat in Darfur and South Sudan. My Special Representative advocated further access by the United Nations to the children and their release and reunification with their families.

141. Killing and maiming accounted for the majority of verified violations (196). Some 50 per cent of the children were killed (21) and maimed (74) by explosive remnants of war, but casualties also resulted from indiscriminate shooting, intercommunal clashes in East Darfur and aerial bombardments. A number of cases in restricted areas could not be documented.

142. Forty-five incidents of sexual violence affecting 60 children, including a boy, were verified and attributed to unidentified armed men (35), militias (13), the Rapid Support Forces (5), armed nomads (3), the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and the police and JEM-Wing for Peace (1 each). In addition, the United Nations in South Sudan documented three incidents by JEM affecting 12 children.

143. Thirteen schools were damaged or looted by the Central Reserve Police and the Rapid Support Forces, but also during Sudanese Armed Forces aerial bombardments and intertribal clashes. All but one of the incidents took place in the eastern Jebel Marra. In two additional incidents, school personnel were threatened by elements of the Rapid Support Forces. Two attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were attributed to the Rapid Support Forces and the Central Reserve Police.

144. Humanitarian access, in particular to Jebel Marra, remained heavily restricted, which impeded efforts to reach affected communities, including children.

145. The country task force on reporting and monitoring engaged with armed groups and a command order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children was issued by JEM in September. In addition, my Special Representative met the leaders of JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid in Austria in May, in consultations organized by the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution. The leaders of the groups issued a joint statement with a commitment to stop and prevent grave violations against children. Lastly, in June SPLM-N signed Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict.

146. In March 2016, my Special Representative visited the Sudan and witnessed the signing of an action plan by the Government to end and prevent child recruitment and use in its security forces. I welcome that step and count on the Government to ensure the swift and full implementation of the action plan.

147. The country task force on monitoring and reporting provided technical support to government personnel and local communities through awareness-raising, the development of referral pathways and community-based child protection networks. Although impunity for grave violations continued to be a concern, there was progress, with arrests being made for sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. I call upon the Government to ensure accountability for all grave violations.

Syrian Arab Republic

148. The conflict was marked by increasing indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombings, especially in the second half of the year, and the proliferation of parties involved, including international forces. Besiegement of areas continued to be used as a tactic of war. On 27 February 2016, a cessation of hostilities agreement allowed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to previously unreachable areas. Owing to the increasingly constrained monitoring environment, the figures below do not reflect the full scale of grave violations committed by all parties to the conflict.

149. A total of 362 cases of recruitment and use of children were verified and attributed to ISIL (274), the Free Syrian Army and affiliated groups (62), Liwa' al-Tawhid (11), popular committees (5), Kurdish People's Protection Units (4), Ahrar al-Sham (3), the Nusrah Front (2) and the Army of Islam (1). Of the verified cases, 56 per cent involved children under 15 years of age, a significant increase

compared with 2014. The payment of salaries and ideology continued to be major influencing factors.

150. The massive recruitment and use of children by ISIL continued. The United Nations verified the existence of centres in rural Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and rural Raqqah that provided military training to at least 124 boys between 10 and 15 years of age. Verification of the use of child foreign fighters increased significantly, with 18 cases of children as young as 7 years of age. The use of children as child executioners was reported and appeared in video footage.

151. The United Nations also verified the recruitment and use of children as young as 9 years of age by the Free Syrian Army, and the recruitment of 11 Syrian refugee children from neighbouring countries by Liwa' al-Tawhid. While cases became increasingly difficult to verify, the Kurdish People's Protection Units continued to recruit boys and girls as young as 14 years of age for combat roles, with pressure and coercion by communities reportedly a factor.

152. Recruitment and use by pro-Government groups was verified, with five cases of boys being recruited by the Popular Committee of Talkalakh (Homs) to work as guards and conduct patrols. In addition, there were allegations of the use of children by government forces to man checkpoints.

153. The Government continued to detain children for their alleged association with armed opposition groups, with 36 cases verified. In 28 of those cases, the children were tortured, and one incident resulted in the child's death in detention. Pro-Government groups continued to deprive children of liberty for alleged association with opposition groups, with three cases attributed to the Popular Committee of Bludan. There were also five cases of ISIL depriving children of liberty owing to their association with parties to conflict.

154. Air strikes, indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas and objects, and complex attacks were the primary causes of killing and maiming of children. The United Nations verified 591 cases of children killed (269 boys, 106 girls and 196 of unknown sex) and 555 injured (203 boys, 128 girls and 224 of unknown sex), attributed to government forces and international forces supporting the Government (585), ISIL (142), the Nusra Front (23), other armed groups (168), the international coalition against ISIL (7), the Kurdish People's Protection Units (2) and unknown parties (219). Mortar, rocket and suicide attacks on government-controlled areas resulted in the killing and maiming of 275 children (77 boys, 93 girls and 105 of unknown sex), attributed to ISIL (79), the Nusra Front (14) and other armed groups (167). Aerial attacks and shelling of civilian areas by government forces and international forces supporting the Government killed and injured 531 children, including 133 from indiscriminate barrel bombs.

155. There was a significant increase in the number of verified cases of children killed and maimed as a result of their association with armed groups, including while participating in combat. Owing to the large numbers of children used by ISIL, at least 148 children were killed in ISIL military areas targeted by air strikes by government forces, international forces supporting the Government and the international coalition. ISIL and the Nusra Front continued to commit atrocities, including the execution of children. On 5 March, the Nusra Front executed two children during a ground offensive on Kanafez (Hama). On 22 August, in Muh

Hasan (Dayr al-Zawr), ISIL publicly amputated limbs of a 15-year-old boy accused of being affiliated with the Free Syrian Army.

156. Conflict-related sexual violence against children continued to be extremely difficult to document, with no case verified in 2015. In areas controlled by ISIL, girls reportedly continued to be vulnerable to early and forced marriage to fighters, while Yezidi girls captured in Iraq in 2014 were reportedly trafficked into the Syrian Arab Republic and used as sex slaves.

157. According to the Ministry of Education, since the beginning of the conflict, more than 6,500 schools have been destroyed, partially damaged, used as shelters for internally displaced persons or rendered otherwise inaccessible. The Ministry reported that 571 students and 419 teachers had been killed in 2015. The United Nations verified 69 attacks on educational facilities (60) and personnel (9) attributed to government forces and pro-Government groups (48), ISIL (11), the Nusrah Front (1), other armed groups (9) and unknown parties (1), which killed and maimed 174 children.

158. ISIL continued to use education to indoctrinate and recruit children. In December, it imposed new regulations of compulsory education for all boys from grades 1 to 12, and for girls from grades 1 to 4, which is a factor contributing to recruitment in ISIL-controlled areas.

159. Reports of attacks on medical facilities increased, with 122 attacks on 93 separate medical facilities and at least 60 medical personnel targeted or killed. The United Nations verified 41 attacks on health facilities (33) and health personnel (8) by government forces and pro-Government groups (32), ISIL (2), other armed groups (2) and unknown parties (5).

160. The United Nations verified eight incidents of military use of schools by government forces in Idlib in March (four of the schools were subsequently attacked by armed groups) and three incidents of military use of hospitals by ISIL in Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah.

161. Children continued to be abducted by parties to the conflict, with 21 cases (15 boys, 4 girls and 2 of unknown sex) attributed to government forces in a hostage-taking incident (13), ISIL (5) and 1 each to the Nusrah Front, the Kurdish People's Protection Units and groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army.

162. Parties to the conflict, in particular the Government, ISIL, the Nusrah Front and armed opposition groups, continued to use siege and starvation as a tactic of war. In January 2016, an estimated 393,700 people were living under siege. Deaths of children as a result of malnutrition were reported. Some 35,000 children targeted by polio vaccination campaigns could not be reached owing to denial of vaccinations by armed groups, including ISIL. The use of water as a weapon of war escalated significantly, with some 7.7 million civilians affected by deliberate water cuts. The United Nations verified attacks on humanitarian facilities and attacks and threats against humanitarian personnel.

163. I call upon the Government to respect its obligations and take urgent action to protect civilians. Furthermore, I urge the Kurdish People's Protection Units and the Free Syrian Army to end child recruitment and use, and implement the commitments previously made.

Yemen

164. The conflict in Yemen escalated significantly following the takeover of Sana'a by the Houthis in September 2014 and the beginning of air strikes by the coalition led by Saudi Arabia on 26 March 2015. Intensive aerial bombardment was followed by ground fighting, taking a devastating toll on the civilian population. Grave violations against children increased dramatically as a result of the escalating conflict.

165. The United Nations documented a fivefold increase in cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular following the escalation of 26 March, notwithstanding the challenges in verifying cases owing to security and access constraints. Of the 762 verified cases of recruitment of children (all boys), the majority were attributed to the Houthis (72 per cent), followed by the pro-Government popular committees (15 per cent) and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (9 per cent). Recruitment was predominant in Houthi strongholds, such as Amanat al-Asimah (103), Ta'izz (69) and Amran (34). A shift was observed from largely voluntary enlistment towards forced or involuntary recruitment through coercion, including through the provision of misleading information or incentives.

166. In 2015, 183 boys were deprived of liberty by popular committees, owing to their association with armed groups, predominantly in Abyan, Aden and Lahij. At least 48 children recruited by Houthi forces were captured by popular committees and deprived of liberty for three to five months, before being released as part of a prisoner exchange that included adults held by popular committees. In addition, a child in Amanat al-Asimah was accused of planting chips in installations to be targeted by the coalition, and deprived of liberty by the Houthis.

167. The United Nations verified a sixfold increase in the number of children killed and maimed compared with 2014, totalling 1,953 child casualties (785 children killed and 1,168 injured). More than 70 per cent were boys. Of the casualties, 60 per cent (510 deaths and 667 injuries) were attributed to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and 20 per cent (142 deaths and 247 injuries) to the Houthis. In 324 incidents, the responsible party could not be identified. ISIL claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device attack on a mosque in Amanat al-Asimah that killed seven children and injured six, in addition to causing many adult casualties. Of the child casualties, 60 per cent were caused by air strikes, predominantly in Amanat al-Asimah, Hajjah and Sa'dah. Significant civilian casualties, including children, as a result of air strikes continued to be documented early in 2016. Ground fighting accounted for 29 per cent of child casualties, with the vast majority in Ta'izz, Aden and Dali'. Child casualties as a result of landmines and explosive remnants of war were documented, with 15 children killed and 67 injured in Abyan, Aden, Amanat al-Asimah, Amran, Bayda', Dali', Dhamar, Lahij, Ma'rib, Sa'dah, Shabwah and Ta'izz.

168. The United Nations verified an incident of sexual violence against a child by a member of an armed group. However, it is likely that this category of violation is underreported.

169. The United Nations verified 101 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals, which is double the number of incidents verified in 2014. Of the attacks, 90 per cent caused the partial or complete destruction of schools or health facilities, while the remaining 10 per cent involved attacks on protected personnel, including students. Of the attacks on schools and hospitals, 48 per cent were attributed to the coalition,

29 per cent to the Houthis and 20 per cent to unidentified perpetrators. More than half of the violations occurred in the period from April to June.

170. Fifty-nine incidents of attacks on 34 hospitals were verified, with multiple attacks on the same facilities, especially in Aden and Ta'izz. In Aden, six facilities were attacked 10 times. In Ta'izz, three health facilities were hit in 23 separate incidents. The majority of repeated attacks were attributed to Houthi forces. For example, the Jumhuriyah hospital in Aden was attacked three times by the Houthis in April. In addition, coalition air strikes destroyed 15 health facilities in the governorate of Sa'dah.

171. The United Nations verified 42 attacks on schools, with the largest number in Amanat al-Asimah (12), Ta'izz (10) and Sa'dah (10). Of the attacks, 57 per cent were attributed to the coalition, 16 per cent to the Houthis and 21 per cent to unknown parties.

172. The United Nations verified 51 incidents of military use of schools, of which the large majority (44) took place in Ta'izz by Houthi forces (20), popular committees (8) and unknown armed groups (16). The Houthis also used schools in Aden, Dali' and Lahij, and two incidents were attributed to popular committees in Aden and unknown armed groups in Ibb. Four incidents of military use of hospitals were verified, of which three were attributed to the Houthis and one to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

173. The United Nations verified the abductions of 11 children, all of which were attributed to the Houthis, with the exception of a case attributed to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. For example, two children were abducted next to Houthi barracks in Dali'. The Houthis and affiliated groups requested a ransom for the return of the children to the families, but the children were later killed.

174. Humanitarian access was severely restricted, with both the coalition and the Houthis imposing obstacles to the delivery of goods and services. The United Nations verified 16 incidents of denial of humanitarian access in Ta'izz, Sa'dah, Aden and Dali', mostly relating to the restriction of entry of humanitarian personnel, and threats and violence against personnel. The majority of verified incidents were attributed to the Houthis (11) and the coalition (3).

175. In May 2014, the Government signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. However, implementation did not advance in the light of the escalation of conflict. My Special Representative engaged in dialogue with the Government, Member States and subsidiary bodies of the Security Council to raise serious concerns about the devastating impact of the conflict on children. I call upon all parties to respect their international legal obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, and encourage the inclusion of child protection concerns in negotiations to end the conflict.

B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations

Colombia

176. Substantial progress was made in the peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del

Pueblo (FARC-EP). In February, the group announced that it would stop recruiting children under 17 years of age and intended to release children under 15 years of age from its ranks. At the invitation of the Government, my Special Representative twice visited Havana to engage with the negotiating parties and facilitators on according priority to the release and reintegration of all under-aged members of FARC-EP, stressing that any action should be based on the principle of the best interest of the children to ensure their protection and successful reintegration, guarantee their rights as victims and prevent rerecruitment by other armed actors. Early in 2016, FARC-EP made public a commitment to ending the recruitment of children under 18 years of age and discussions on the separation of children continued. A historic agreement on the peace agenda item relating to victims was announced on 15 December, foreseeing the creation of a comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition for victims, which identified children as a vulnerable group.

177. Armed violence between FARC-EP and government forces reached its lowest level in 50 years and displacement decreased following the unilateral ceasefire declared by FARC-EP and the suspension of government aerial bombings. Nevertheless, activities by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)⁴ and post-demobilization armed groups continued to cause forced displacement.

178. The United Nations verified 289 cases of child recruitment and use by armed groups, the majority of which were documented following their separation and had been formerly associated with FARC-EP (182) and ELN (74). Cases were also attributed to the Ejército Popular de Liberación (1) and post-demobilization and other armed groups (32).

179. The killing of 12 children and maiming of 10, mainly as a result of landmines, were verified. With 31 of its 32 departments contaminated, landmines are a serious concern for the protection of children in Colombia. On 7 March, the Government and FARC-EP announced that they would carry out joint humanitarian demining initiatives (joint communiqué No. 52) and the parties began working on pilot projects.

180. The country task force on monitoring and reporting recorded 10 girls who were victims of sexual violence committed by the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (8), FARC-EP and an unidentified perpetrator. One additional case by a member of the Colombian military in 2012 was reported in 2015. The perpetrator was in detention awaiting trial at the time of writing (March 2016).

181. Eleven schools were damaged in crossfire and by landmines and explosive remnants of war. At least two teachers were killed by unidentified armed groups and allegations of threats against teachers by FARC-EP, ELN, the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia and Los Rastrojos were received. In addition, there were one case of military use of schools by FARC-EP and four cases by the Colombian military in violation of directives issued by the Ministry of Defence.

182. I welcome the decision of the Constitutional Court of 18 February 2016 that children recruited by all armed groups, including post-demobilization groups, are victims and have the right to reparations guaranteed in the Victims' Act (No. 1448 of 2011). This is an important step forward that aims to guarantee equal treatment

⁴ ELN has been listed for recruitment and use of children in annex II to the present report since 2003. The launch of peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and ELN was announced in March 2016.

between children associated with guerrilla groups and those associated with post-demobilization groups, by ensuring that every recruited child will be treated primarily as a victim and receive adequate reintegration support.

183. There has been historic progress in Colombia and I encourage the Government to secure guarantees for non-repetition and pay particular attention to the specific protection needs of indigenous children, children of African descent and children in marginalized areas, so as to address and prevent violations against children.

India

184. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children as young as 6 years of age by armed groups, including the Naxalites, in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal States. Reports indicate that children were coerced to join children's units ("Bal Dasta"), where they were trained and used as couriers and informants, to plant improvised explosive devices and in front-line operations against national security forces. For example, in April, the Bharatiya Communist Party (Maoist) reportedly forced the inhabitants of seven villages in Gumla district, Jharkhand State, to hand over five children per village to join their ranks. To avoid such forcible recruitment, families have resorted to sending children away from home at a young age, leading to children dropping out of school.

185. In the eastern provinces, children were killed and injured as a result of violence and fighting between armed groups and national security forces. In June, 12 Communist Party of India (Maoist) fighters, including 4 children dressed in uniforms, were killed in a joint police operation in Bhalwahi village, Jharkhand State.

186. The abduction of children, especially girls, by armed groups was a serious concern. Abducted children are subjected to further grave violations and abuses, and have been forced to serve in combat functions, exposed to sexual violence and, reportedly, used as human shields. In April, Maoists reportedly abducted five girls aged between 10 and 13 years of age from Karcha village, West Bengal State, and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Nigeria

187. Early in 2015, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, renamed Islamic State's West African Province and commonly known as Boko Haram, controlled large swathes of territory in the north-eastern States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. In response, the Nigerian security forces intensified their military operations, in conjunction with the Civilian Joint Task Force, as well as local pro-Government vigilante groups, retaking control of territory. According to the Nigerian security forces, only two local government areas were under Boko Haram control (Abadam and Mobar in Borno State) by December.

188. As Boko Haram increasingly resorted to hit-and-run attacks on "soft targets", the group also intensified its operations, including suicide attacks, which have spread from north-east Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, causing a significant number of casualties among civilians and large-scale displacement. Consequently, by the end of December, in excess of 1.8 million persons had been displaced within Nigeria, including more than 1 million children, and 220,304 were registered as refugees in neighbouring countries.

189. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 278 children (143 boys and 135 girls) by Boko Haram (225) and the Civilian Joint Task Force (53). Twenty-one girls were used in suicide attacks claimed by Boko Haram, 11 of which were documented in the fourth quarter. Children were used in suicide attacks not only in Nigeria, but also in Cameroon and Chad, with cases also reported early in 2016. Of the 1,010 children (422 boys and 588 girls) encountered or rescued during the course of military operations in north-east Nigeria, 204 (117 girls and 87 boys) had been recruited and used by Boko Haram. With regards to the Civilian Joint Task Force, children were used to man checkpoints and as messengers and spies.

190. Cases of 129 children detained for alleged association with Boko Haram were documented (69 boys and 60 girls), including 85 held in military barracks in Maiduguri, 22 at the Aguata camp in eastern Nigeria by the Office of the National Security Adviser, after passing through the Chad security corridor, and 21 girls in Lagos detained by the Nigeria Department of State Services and the Nigerian security forces. On 1 December, an 11-year-old boy was arrested in Maiduguri, reportedly for being a suspected "Boko Haram terrorist", and his picture displayed on posters disseminated throughout Nigeria. The poster appeared to include at least three other boys. In November, the Nigerian security forces handed over to the Governor of Borno State 48 boys and 10 girls who had been in military detention in Maiduguri since August for alleged association with Boko Haram.

191. At least 5,480 persons were reportedly killed in 352 incidents, a decrease of 26 per cent compared with 2014. The United Nations verified the killing of 244 children (109 boys and 135 girls), mostly in Borno (130), Adamawa (54) and Yobe (48). Sixty-five of them were killed in 13 suicide attacks committed by children. A total of 112 children (54 boys and 58 girls) were also maimed.

192. In May and June, 253 children (84 boys and 169 girls) encountered during military operations participated in an "deradicalization programme" run by the Office of the National Security Adviser in a facility in Kaduna State, to which the United Nations was given access in June. The Office reported that four girls were pregnant as a result of sexual violence during their captivity and that all 68 mothers of the 112 children under 5 years of age had been either raped and/or were wives of Boko Haram members. The facility was closed down on 6 November, but it was unclear whether the women and children who returned to their communities or camps for displaced persons received reintegration support.

193. Since 2014, an estimated 1,500 schools have been destroyed in north-east Nigeria, including 524 in Borno State. This has prevented access to education for more than 400,000 children. Five schools were reportedly used for military purposes by Boko Haram in Bauchi State, and three schools by the Nigerian security forces since April 2014 in Maiduguri and Chibok Local Government Area, Borno State. To strengthen the protection of education, Nigeria endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, agreeing to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

194. Abduction by Boko Haram continued, with 162 cases documented, of which the United Nations verified 26 (15 boys and 11 girls). In addition, 693 children encountered or rescued during military operations (327 boys and 366 girls) had reportedly been abducted. There is no indication whether any of the Chibok schoolgirls, abducted in 2014, were among those rescued.

195. Engagement with the Nigerian authorities continued, including on the handover of children encountered during operations by the Nigerian security forces to civilian authorities. In December, the United Nations assisted the National Human Rights Commission and the Nigerian security forces in organizing a workshop to review the military code of conduct and rules of engagement for operations against Boko Haram. With regard to efforts to combat impunity, I welcome the establishment of a human rights desk at the army headquarters tasked to investigate human rights violations committed by the military, and I encourage the inclusion of dedicated child protection capacity to investigate grave violations committed against children. I am concerned by the number of children recruited and used by the Civilian Joint Task Force and I call upon the Government to take swift action to prevent further cases.

Pakistan

196. In 2015, attacks by armed groups in Pakistan declined by 48 per cent compared with 2014. The majority of attacks were attributed to TTP, predominantly in Baluchistan. The Government's military operations in North Waziristan against armed groups continued throughout 2015.

197. Reports were received of the use of religious schools for recruitment and military training of children by TTP and other armed groups (see S/2015/336).

198. Child casualties were reported as a result of indiscriminate attacks and armed violence. For example, on 4 January, four children were killed and 10 injured when an improvised explosive device detonated at a volleyball match in Orakzai Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In October, a suicide attack on a religious procession in Jacobabad, Sindh Province, killed 18 children and injured more than 40 others. Further indiscriminate attacks occurred early in 2016, when a large bomb blast claimed by a TTP faction killed more than 20 children in Lahore on 27 March.

199. Fourteen attacks on educational institutions across Pakistan were recorded, a decline of 65 per cent compared with 2014. They included the destruction of schools, including girls' schools, and occurred mostly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (eight), Sindh (four) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (two).

200. Notwithstanding the continued targeting of health personnel, humanitarian access to children increased, in particular for polio workers in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Attacks on polio workers continued, however, with 11 people killed in six attacks. For example, four members of a polio team were killed following their abduction in Northern Baluchistan. In addition, 76 security incidents, including 42 cases of threats and intimidation against polio workers, were reported throughout Pakistan.

201. I am concerned by reports of children being sentenced to death by military courts on terrorism-related charges. I urge the Government to adhere to its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits capital punishment for offences committed by persons under 18 years of age.

Philippines

202. There were limited large-scale armed engagements in 2015. However, sporadic low-intensity clashes continued to affect children, predominantly in Mindanao. An increased number of grave violations were documented in indigenous communities

resulting from the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the New People's Army (NPA), increasingly involving the Alamara and Magahat paramilitary groups with alleged links to the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

203. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 17 children, including 15 children used as human shields, by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in one incident, and two recruited by NPA. Unverified reports indicated that the Abu Sayyaf Group recruited around 30 children in Basilan in April.

204. Two cases of detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups were verified. In January, a 17-year-old boy was detained and questioned by the Armed Forces of the Philippines for alleged association with NPA in the Davao region.

205. The United Nations verified the killing of 6 children and the injury of 25. A third of the casualties were attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group. For example, in May, a boy was beheaded by the Group in Basilan for allegedly spying. Two verified incidents were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, involving the killing of two children and injury of two others. On 18 August, in Bukidnon Province, northern Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines killed five family members in front of their house, including two boys aged 14 and 17 years. Two injuries were attributed to the Magahat paramilitary group, one killing to NPA and one injury to the National Police. The other 13 casualties were attributed to crossfire or explosive remnants of war.

206. The United Nations verified the rape of a 14-year-old girl by three soldiers in three separate incidents between May and July. The soldiers were court-martialled and their superior was recommended for administrative sanctions. However, the civilian criminal proceedings for rape were dismissed owing to insufficient evidence.

207. Almost all verified cases of attacks on schools and education personnel took place in indigenous communities. Private schools run by non-governmental organizations were systematically targeted for alleged links to NPA. Five incidents were attributed to the Magahat paramilitary group, three to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, two to the Alamara paramilitary group and one each to NPA and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. In a particularly grave incident, the director of a school run by a non-governmental organization was killed in an indigenous community in Caraga by the Magahat paramilitary group. No arrests have been made, despite warrants being issued. The United Nations verified 10 incidents of military use of schools; 6 incidents were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 3 incidents jointly to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and paramilitary groups and 1 to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.

208. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front demonstrated a strong commitment to the action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use, achieving significant progress. The majority of the benchmarks have been reached and, in November, its leaders agreed on the steps required to identify and disengage any children associated with it. The full implementation of the action plan also requires safeguards to prevent recruitment and association, linked to the implementation of existing accountability mechanisms. Services to minimize the risk of reassociation of children will also be important.

209. In an encouraging development, in 2015, UNICEF renewed engagement with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines/NPA on its declaration and programme of action for the rights, protection and welfare of children.

210. The United Nations continues to work with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on its 2012 strategic plan on prevention and response to grave child rights violations in situations of armed conflict to ensure that it strengthens the protection of children in the light of continuing violations involving the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Thailand

211. Violence in southern Thailand continued, notwithstanding the reinitiation of dialogue between the Government and an umbrella organization of armed groups.

212. Although no cases of recruitment and use of children were reported, according to information provided by the Government, an armed group trained children as young as 13 years of age in the use of weapons in Narathiwat Province early in January 2016. The United Nations continued to receive reports of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups.

213. The United Nations received reports of the killing of 4 children and the injury of 15 in shootings and improvised explosive device attacks in Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala Provinces. This is a significant decrease compared with 2014 (23 children killed and 65 injured).

214. Schools and education personnel continued to be targeted by armed groups. According to the Ministry of Education, as at November, two teachers and a student had been killed, and a teacher and two students injured, in such attacks. In addition, on 11 September, a bomb attack at the entrance of a community school in Pattani Province injured five students between 3 and 15 years of age; a criminal investigation is continuing. The authorities have provided security escorts to teachers in affected areas.

215. I welcome and encourage the continuing dialogue between the Government and the United Nations country team on strengthening the protection of children in the southern border provinces and on access to those areas to conduct independent verification and reporting of alleged violations against children. In December, during a consultation on the dialogue process, convened by the Internal Security Operation Command for Southern Thailand, civil society organizations and the United Nations raised the need to include children in the agenda of the dialogue process to strengthen their protection in the south, which I strongly support.

IV. Recommendations

216. I am deeply concerned at the scale and increasing severity of the grave violations that were committed in 2015, including continuing large-scale abduction, and call upon all parties to immediately end and take all measures to prevent grave violations against children.

217. I urge Member States to ensure that their engagement in hostilities and responses to all threats to peace and security, including in efforts to counter violent extremism, are conducted in full compliance with international

humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. It is unacceptable that the failure to do so has resulted in numerous violations of children's rights. Member States should include specific mitigating measures for the protection of children in their responses, in particular when conducting aerial bombing campaigns or ground operations. I also call upon all parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, and to consider making a commitment to this effect.

218. I encourage the Member States concerned by the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign to redouble their efforts to fully implement their action plans in the coming year and invite regional organizations, the international community and all relevant partners to provide increased support to those making progress.

219. I urge Member States to hand over children encountered during military operations to civilian child protection actors as soon as possible, in accordance with their international obligations and the best interests of the child. It is crucial that there be appropriate resources for the reintegration of the children separated from parties to conflict, with attention given to psychosocial support and the needs of girls.

220. I call upon Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights and to urgently put in place alternatives to the detention and prosecution of children.

221. I call upon Member States to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of grave violations against children. I encourage the donor community to support national justice systems in conflict and post-conflict situations, including by providing resources and technical capacity.

222. I encourage the Security Council to highlight, in its resolutions and debates, the prevention of displacement, the rights of children displaced by conflict and the obligations of States of origin, transit and destination.

223. I encourage Member States and regional organizations involved in negotiating cessation of hostilities or peace agreements to include specific child protection provisions to maximize opportunities to engage with parties and enhance the protection of children.

224. I call upon the Security Council to continue to request the deployment of dedicated child protection capacity to United Nations peace operations, in order to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and for monitoring and reporting.

V. Observations

225. I am shocked by the scale of the grave violations committed by parties to conflict in many situations, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Noted herein are the complex environments created by aerial operations by some Member States' armed forces and international coalitions, which killed and maimed many children. State-allied armed groups and militias have also increasingly been used to fight in support of government forces.

In some cases, State-allied armed groups have recruited and used children and committed other violations. Furthermore, I am gravely concerned at the increasing prevalence of deprivation of liberty of children allegedly associated with parties to conflict.

226. Member States should consider, as a matter of priority, changes in policies, military procedures and legislation, where necessary, to prevent violations and protect children. I have previously stated that those who engage in military action resulting in numerous violations of children's rights will find themselves under scrutiny by the United Nations. Accountability remains a key priority and a shared responsibility in order to end and prevent grave violations against children.

227. I reiterate that all parties to conflict identified in the present report should work with my Special Representative to protect children caught up in conflict.

VI. Lists in the annexes to the present report

228. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2225 (2015), Al-Shabaab (Somalia), Boko Haram (Nigeria), LRA (Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo), ISIL (Iraq) and the Taliban (Afghanistan) are listed for abduction of children. Those five groups have committed patterns of abduction of children over a number of years. SPLA (South Sudan) is also listed for abduction as a result of hundreds of violations attributed to it in 2015. Other parties have been added to existing trigger violations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Raia Mutomboki⁵ is listed for the recruitment and use of and sexual violence against children. In Nigeria, the Civilian Joint Task Force is listed for the recruitment and use of children, with more than 50 verified cases in 2015. In South Sudan, SPLA is now also listed for sexual violence against children, with more than 100 incidents attributed to government forces. In Yemen, owing to the very large number of violations attributed to the two parties, the Houthis/Ansar Allah and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition are listed for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals.

229. Other changes in the lists resulted from changes in the respective situations. With the removal of the specific regional section in the report, the Lord's Resistance Army, in addition to being listed for abduction, is now listed in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of, and sexual violence against, children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine" and former elements of the Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais are now referred to as the Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix also known as Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine", while Mayi Mayi Simba "Morgan" is now referred to as Mayi Mayi Simba.

⁵ The main commanders identified within Raia Mutomboki are (Major) Bwansolu Lizaba (alias "Mwami Alexandre"), (Major) Eyadema Bugugu and (Major) Kikuni Savikungi.

Annex I

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals, or abduct children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council*

Parties in Afghanistan

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police^{a,*}
2. Haqqani Network^{a,b}
3. Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar^{a,b}
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wal-Sunna and the Latif Mansur Network^{a,b,d,e}

Parties in the Central African Republic

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups^{a,b,c,d}
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka^{a,b,c}
3. Lord's Resistance Army^{a,b,c,e}

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Allied Democratic Forces^{a,b,d}
2. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo)^{a,c,*}
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda^{a,c,d}
4. Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri^{a,c,d}
5. Lord's Resistance Army^{a,b,c,e}
6. Mayi Mayi Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain "Colonel Janvier"^a
7. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (UPCP) also known as Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine"^a
8. Mayi Mayi Simba^{a,c}

* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

^a Parties that recruit and use children.

^b Parties that kill and maim children.

^c Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

^d Parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

^e Parties that abduct children.

* This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

9. Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga^a
10. Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka^{a,b}
11. Mayi Mayi Nyatura^a
12. Raia Mutomboki^{a,c}

Parties in Iraq

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant^{a,b,c,d,e}

Parties in Mali

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad^{a,c}
2. Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest^{a,c}
3. Ansar Eddine^{a,c}

Parties in Myanmar

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army^a
2. Kachin Independence Army^a
3. Karen National Liberation Army^a
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council^a
5. Karenni Army^a
6. Shan State Army-South^a
7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces^{a,*}
8. United Wa State Army^a

Parties in Somalia

1. Al-Shabaab^{a,h,e}
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)^a
3. Somali National Army^{a,b,*}

Parties in South Sudan

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army^{a,h,c,e,*}
2. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition^{a,b,*}
3. White Army^a

Parties in the Sudan

1. Government security forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Popular Defence Forces and the Sudan Police Forces^{a,*}
2. Justice and Equality Movement^a
3. Pro-Government militias^a

4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid^a
5. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi^a
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North^a

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Ahrar al-Sham^{a,b}
2. Free Syrian Army — affiliated groups^a
3. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and the shabbiha militia^{b,c,d}
4. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant^{a,b,c,d}
5. Nusrah Front^{a,b}
6. People's Protection Units^a

Parties in Yemen

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah^{a,b,d}
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia^a
3. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the First Armoured Division, the Military Police, the special security forces and Republican Guards^{a,*}
4. Pro-Government militias, including the Salafists and Popular Committees^a
5. Saudi Arabia-led coalition^{b,d}

Annex II

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals, or abduct children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations*

Parties in Colombia

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional^a
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo^a

Parties in Nigeria

1. Civilian Joint Task Force^a
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram^{a,b,d,e}

Parties in the Philippines

1. Abu Sayyaf Group^a
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters^a
3. Moro Islamic Liberation Front^{a,*}
4. New People's Army^a

* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

^a Parties that recruit and use children.

^b Parties that kill and maim children.

^c Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

^d Parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

^e Parties that abduct children.

* This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

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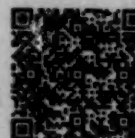
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Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence**Report of the Secretary-General****I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2015, is submitted pursuant to paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 2106 (2013), in which the Council requested me to report annually on the implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), and to recommend strategic actions. Developments during the reporting period have deepened concerns about the use of sexual violence by terrorist and violent extremist groups, including as part of the systems of punishment and reward through which they consolidate their power. In resolution 2242 (2015), the Council recognized the changing global context of peace and security, in particular the gender dimensions of violent extremism and mass displacement. The Council's recognition of sexual violence as both a tactic of war and a tactic of terrorism (resolution 2242 (2015)) affirms that conflict-resolution and counter-terrorism strategies can no longer be decoupled from efforts to protect and empower women and girls and to combat conflict-related sexual violence.

2. The term "conflict-related sexual violence" refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked (temporally, geographically or causally) to a conflict. This link with conflict may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator (often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group), the profile of the victim (who is frequently a member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority), the climate of impunity (which is generally associated with State collapse), cross-border consequences (such as displacement or trafficking in persons) and/or violations of the terms of a ceasefire agreement.

3. While many settings are affected by the threat, occurrence or legacy of conflict-related sexual violence, the present report is focused on 19 country situations for which credible information is available. For the first time, United Nations country presences were requested to report on the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism (see sect. III). The report should be read in conjunction with my seven previous reports on conflict-related sexual violence, which provide a



cumulative basis for the listing of 48 parties (see annex). As in 2014, the majority of listed parties are non-State actors. Engaging with such groups to foster compliance with Security Council resolutions raises unprecedented political and operational challenges. All States repeatedly listed for grave violations against children and/or conflict-related sexual violence will be prohibited from participating in United Nations peace operations. Troop and police contributors that are currently listed for such violations are required to engage with my special representatives in order to be delisted and to implement specific time-bound commitments and action plans to address violations for which they are listed (see resolution 2242 (2015) and S/2015/682).

4. The report is based on cases documented by the United Nations. The increased presence in the field of women's protection advisers, who are responsible for convening the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence and facilitating dialogue in order to obtain protection commitments from parties to conflict, has deepened the quality of the data and analysis aimed at informing interventions. To date, 34 women's protection advisers have been deployed to seven mission settings. All six peacekeeping missions with a mandate that includes the protection of civilians have established the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and incorporated the matrix of early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence into their broader protection arrangements. A concerted effort to enhance prevention, early warning and timely responses to conflict-related sexual violence will continue to require dedicated human and financial resources commensurate with the scale of this challenge.

5. Strengthening the capacity of national institutions is critical to ensuring accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in accordance with its mandate under Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), has provided assistance to Governments, including in the areas of criminal investigation and prosecution, military justice, legislative reform, protection of victims and witnesses and reparations for survivors. Reporting directly to my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Team of Experts is composed of experts from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a specialist seconded by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Team also maintains a roster of experts with a range of specializations. Since its establishment, the Team has played a catalytic role in implementing the frameworks of cooperation agreed upon between my Special Representative and national authorities and regional actors, complementing the work of the United Nations country presence. With dedicated assistance, Governments can effectively adjudicate such crimes, as in the case of Guinea, where the technical assistance of the Team has resulted in 16 indictments of military and political leaders for sexual violence and other crimes committed in September 2009. The Team, by virtue of its structure and composition, has contributed to enhanced coherence on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence among the entities constituting it. To date, the Team has been engaged in the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan.

6. The United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, which consists of 13 United Nations entities and is chaired by my Special

Representative, supports the development of training, guidance and advocacy resources aimed at building the technical capacity of United Nations country presences to deliver a coordinated and holistic response to conflict-related sexual violence. In 2015, it provided catalytic funding for the deployment of women's protection advisers to Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported a mapping of interventions to implement the national strategy to combat gender-based violence in Côte d'Ivoire and funded a joint project in Bosnia and Herzegovina supporting transitional justice. A number of tools and knowledge products were produced to improve practice in the field, including guidance on strengthening the medico-legal response to sexual violence in conflict, developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organization (WHO); a guidance note on the intersections between the Gender-based Violence Information Management System and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and a menu of country-level support options. Joint technical support missions were conducted to Mali in January and South Sudan in April. In 2015, through the joint roster of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Justice Rapid Response of international investigators of crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence, some 30 experts were deployed to accountability mechanisms, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the commission of inquiry on human rights in Eritrea, the fact-finding missions to Iraq and Libya, and the national war crimes processes. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, in collaboration with a range of partners, developed a new conflict-related sexual violence training module for core and advanced-level predeployment training, in addition to advanced-level integrated mission training for military, police and civilian components.

II. Sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security: overview of current and emerging concerns

7. A consistent concern is that fear and cultural stigma converge to prevent the vast majority of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence from coming forward to report such violence. Practitioners in the field estimate that for each rape reported in connection with a conflict, 10 to 20 cases go undocumented. The figures presented here reflect incident reports and therefore do not indicate the magnitude of the problem. My successive reports on conflict-related sexual violence provide a cumulative picture of the factors that can either enable or constrain the ability of survivors to seek redress. In addition to the debilitating physical and psychological trauma, most victims fear being stigmatized or subjected to reprisals by the perpetrators. This is compounded by a lack of confidence in national institutions, including the police and judiciary, especially when sexual violence is perpetrated by the very forces meant to provide protection.

8. Accordingly, a critical objective is to bring information to light and improve the opportunities for survivors to safely seek recourse. Any attempt to suppress such information by intimidating victims, witnesses or their families in order to convince them to recant complaints, or by denying access to relevant sites, is a further violation that warrants Security Council scrutiny. Such intimidation often extends to

service providers and can thus have a chilling effect on their response. Late reporting can be lethal. For example, in the Central African Republic, only 26 per cent of survivors seek assistance within 72 hours, missing a critical opportunity to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission or unwanted pregnancy and to gather forensic evidence. Amidst emergencies, vast population movements, capacity constraints, suspended legal systems and overburdened, underfunded or inaccessible services complicate documentation. The denial of access to places that may cause acute vulnerability, such as detention settings, is another impediment. The threat or use of sexual violence as a form of ill treatment in detention and interrogation centres remains a largely unquantified problem, although extensive testimonial evidence, including from Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, points to its prevalence. Such violence is often used as a form of torture against men and boys, many of whom remain silent for fear of social ostracism due to accusations of homosexuality in contexts in which it is taboo or even criminalized, as it remains in 78 countries. An important, albeit counter-intuitive, consideration in interpreting information on conflict-related sexual violence is that an increase in the number of survivors coming forward to report such violence, including to State-run facilities, generally signifies an easing of access restrictions, the availability of high-quality care and an improvement in the security situation overall.

9. Experience from the field attests that, when appropriate mechanisms are in place, such as the gender-based violence crisis hotline in Somalia operated by a non-governmental organization, or the sustainable community-based care available in remote regions of the Central African Republic, reporting increases significantly. When there are specialists available and confidential avenues for reporting, the issue becomes visible and can be addressed, rather than the attendant trauma, disease and desire for vengeance being left to fester within communities. When multisectoral services are available, survivors may be more willing to pursue justice, as seen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 66 per cent of rape survivors who received integrated medical, psychosocial and legal support opted to file a case. The only country covered herein for which detailed data are provided on sexual violence against men and boys is the Central African Republic, where a conscious effort has been made to describe gender-based violence services in gender-neutral terms and to train both male and female staff with a view to minimizing the perception that they support women exclusively. A total of 62 countries still provide no legal protection for male rape victims. Free medical treatment is also crucial for a survivor-centred response. However, in many settings, survivors are charged fees by the police to open a case file, as in Somalia, or asked to pay for medical certificates, as in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, health providers often require survivors to report to the police before receiving care. In Myanmar, this has meant that only 4 per cent of gender-based violence survivors choose to access services. The practice of mandatory reporting to the police also presents a barrier to access to care in contexts such as the Sudan and South Sudan, despite formal instructions to the contrary, as well as in the Syrian Arab Republic and some countries receiving Syrian refugees.

10. It is alarming that incidents of mass rape continue to occur with impunity despite the issue having been a priority concern on the agenda of the Security Council for almost a decade. In 2015, such cases were documented in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Sudan, and widespread and systematic sexual violence continued in the Syrian Arab Republic and areas of Iraq

held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In addition, reports of targeted sexual assaults based on actual or perceived political affiliation emerged in Burundi. When suspects implicated in such incidents are released from custody, or are redeployed in proximity to civilian centres, it signals to communities that reporting is not only dangerous, but also futile. Rapists anticipate that their victims will not have the means, courage or support required to testify against them, especially in the chaos of conflict. Prosecution is therefore essential to prevention, because it can deter potential perpetrators and contribute to restoring faith in the rule of law. It demonstrates that no political or military leader is above the law and no woman or child is beneath it. However, given the absence, obstruction or protracted pace of justice in many conflict-affected settings, communities commonly resort to traditional mechanisms. In South Sudan, it is estimated that 90 per cent of such cases are resolved through customary courts, which often require rape victims to marry the perpetrator as a form of settlement. In north-east Nigeria and in Somalia, "restitution" through marriage is widely accepted by victims' families in order to avoid "shame", and in Myanmar, "reparation marriages" are a traditional remedy for rape. Such measures not only fail to provide deterrence, but also deny the victim a future, effectively sentencing her to repeated rape.

11. Patterns of sexual violence also persist as a manifestation of a lack of discipline and lax command and control. An encouraging development has been the adoption of commitments, action plans and disciplinary measures by parties to armed conflict, such as the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), as well as progress on implementing zero-tolerance policies and codes of conduct for the armed forces in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire and Nepal. Efforts to obtain protection commitments have also been undertaken with non-State actors, such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). This is the first time, in the latter case, that a specific plan to combat sexual violence has been adopted by a non-State armed group. To change behaviour, such efforts must become more systematic. A glaring disparity remains between international human rights standards and national legislation in conflict-affected countries, which often minimizes these crimes or conflates them with adultery, as in Afghanistan and Yemen. This shields the perpetrator at the expense of the victim. Transitional justice can provide an opportunity for transforming harmful social norms and ensuring that wartime atrocities do not become entrenched in the post-conflict period. This process begins with gender-responsive mediation aimed at ensuring that concerns regarding conflict-related sexual violence are reflected in ceasefire agreements, peace accords and subsequent implementation mechanisms. Effectively addressing the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in peace agreements can potentially increase the durability of peace by mitigating security fears and improving transparency, accountability and confidence among the parties. However, of all the unfolding peace processes referenced herein, the Colombian process alone has addressed gender concerns in a systematic manner that exemplifies the aims of the Security Council in resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and subsequent resolutions. This can ensure that conflict-related sexual violence is not omitted by history, but rather reflected in the public record, validating the experiences of survivors and promoting reconciliation.

12. In response to the age-old culture of denial and impunity that has characterized this scourge, in 2015 the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution declaring 19 June the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (resolution 69/293). The aim of the resolution, which was sponsored by 114 countries, is to commemorate the breakthrough adoption on 19 June 2008 of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), in which the Council condemned sexual violence as a tactic of war and an impediment to peacebuilding. The commemoration provides a new opportunity to raise awareness, stand in solidarity with the survivors and pay tribute to those working on the front lines.

13. Women and girls face a heightened risk of sexual assault when performing livelihood activities such as collecting firewood, grass or water, going to markets or tending fields, as in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Nigeria, South Sudan and the Sudan (Darfur), or when herding cattle, as in remote areas of Myanmar. In the Central African Republic, rape has been used to punish Christian women for trading with members of the Muslim community and to “dishonour” them so that they dare not set foot in Muslim enclaves. Given that there is already a pronounced gender gap in terms of women’s access to land and other productive assets, this reduces their resilience to security shocks, including in terms of financial and food security. The ever-present threat of sexual assault compels women to lead highly circumscribed lives in militarized zones, as seen in eastern Afghanistan or northern Sri Lanka. Moreover, high-profile women across a range of professions have been subjected to sexual harassment and humiliation aimed at silencing them. In this way, sexual violence serves as a tool of social and moral control to relegate women to the private sphere and to punish perceived “countercultural” behaviour. Professional women in Libya have been exposed to inflammatory rhetoric, and Afghan women serving in, or training to join, the security sector have suffered sexual harassment. In Burundi, women associated with the political opposition have been depicted in media cartoons as prostitutes. This carries echoes of the media incitement to violence against women during the Rwandan genocide of 1994, as well as of the incitement to ethnically motivated rape by Radio Benti FM during the resurgence of conflict in South Sudan in April 2014. In 2015, reports emerged of ISIL using radio broadcasts to threaten and terrorize women. Historically, misogynistic media propaganda and crackdowns on women’s rights and freedoms have presaged the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, terrorism and political repression. This underscores the strategic value of gender analysis in all atrocity-prevention efforts.

14. In some contexts, sexual violence is employed as a tool of genocide against indigenous, religious, ethnic or political minorities. Extremist groups such as ISIL have raped women pursuant to a plan of self-perpetuation aimed at transmitting their ideology to a new generation who can be raised in their own image. In this way, women’s bodies are used as “biological weapons” to alter the demography of a region and to unravel existing kinship ties. In addition, individuals have been targeted for physical and sexual violence on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. The risks facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex minorities has been a blind spot in the monitoring of civilian protection concerns. This issue was featured for the first time in my previous report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203). In the intervening year, it has become apparent that enhanced attention, including through the Council’s Arria formula meeting on the

persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex minorities in the Middle East, held on 24 August 2015, is leading to heightened awareness.

15. When security deteriorates, women and girls often find their mobility greatly restricted. They currently face grave threats when passing checkpoints in Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; using public transportation, which may be operated by ex-combatants, as in parts of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali; and at every stage of the displacement cycle, including in the camps or urban settlements in which they seek refuge. During the reporting period, a mass migration crisis occurred, which included conflict-related sexual violence as a deliberate form of persecution to displace populations in the Horn of Africa, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. As a result, more than 950,000 new refugees and migrants reached Europe. Reports have emerged of people-smugglers demanding sex as "payment of passage" and of an evolving criminal infrastructure designed to exploit refugees, in particular unaccompanied minors, including for trafficking, commercial sex and sexual slavery. Given these cross-border dynamics, it is critical that effective regional and subregional cooperation be undertaken to close corridors for trafficking in persons.

16. In countries in which women are denied the right to confer their nationality upon their children, contrary to article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, there is a considerable risk that such children will be left unregistered and stateless, which will result in their socioeconomic marginalization and vulnerability to future radicalization. This includes children born as a result of rape, who continue to live in the shadows. Although there are many children born as a result of rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Rwanda, they are rarely accepted by society and often viewed as both a "bad memory" and a future threat. Social pressures combined with a lack of reproductive health care make unsafe abortion a leading cause of maternal mortality in many displacement settings, from the Central African Republic to South Sudan.

17. Increased debt and dependency on humanitarian assistance have led many displaced families to rely on harmful coping strategies, such as the early marriage of girls. The rate of underage marriage among Syrian refugee girls hosted in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey has more than doubled since the beginning of the crisis (from 12 to 26 per cent) owing to fears of sexual violence, lack of access to education and economic hardship. Abduction for the purposes of sexual slavery or forced marriage to combatants also appears to be on the rise. Armed groups often view the civilian population as a resource to be exploited, seeing women's sexuality and fertility as commodities to be "owned", trafficked and traded as part of the political economy of war. This is evident in the cross-border trafficking of Syrian and Iraqi women and children. Crucially, in December 2015, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on trafficking in persons (S/PRST/2015/25), in which the Council affirmed the nexus between such trafficking and sexual violence and underscored the urgency of efforts to deter, detect and disrupt trafficking in persons, including by ISIL, Boko Haram and other violent extremist groups.

18. Serious and continuing allegations and underreporting of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces represent another area of major concern. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers

violates the very trust placed in them by host populations and the expectation that such peacekeepers will fulfil their mandate to protect civilians. Global attention has been paid to the sexual abuse of minors in the Central African Republic by peacekeeping forces and sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in Somalia and elsewhere (see A/70/729). Sexual exploitation and abuse, among other crimes and forms of serious misconduct, by military, civilian and police personnel is unacceptable, and the United Nations system will continue to strengthen efforts to implement the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation. Regular reporting to the Secretary-General by United Nations mechanisms, including those related to children and armed conflict, women and peace and security, and OHCHR will continue to include allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (see resolution 2272 (2016)).

III. Sexual violence committed in the context of violent extremism, including as a tactic of terrorism

19. The shocking trend of sexual violence employed as a tactic of terrorism by violent extremist groups was documented in my previous report, in which I built a case for making women's protection and empowerment central to counter-terrorism strategies, which have traditionally been gender-blind. It demonstrated that the targeting of women and girls that accompanies the rise of extremism is not incidental, but premeditated, systematic and strategic. While the threat of sexual violence has been a "push" factor driving the forced displacement of civilians, the offer of wives and sex slaves has been a strategic "pull" factor for the recruitment of men and boys, inducing both local young people and foreign fighters to join the ranks of ISIL. ISIL has also used medical professionals to procure drugs and administer harmful treatments not justified by medical concerns, including hormone treatments to accelerate the physical maturation of young girls in order to expedite their sale and sexual exploitation, and drugging them to facilitate rape, thus making some physicians complicit in medicalized torture.

20. Following the advocacy of my Special Representative, there have been a number of efforts during the reporting period to mainstream such considerations into policy processes. In October, the Security Council expressed deep concern, in its resolution 2242 (2015), that acts of sexual violence were part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, which were used to increase their power, revenue and recruitment base and to shred the social fabric of targeted communities. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) includes a focus on gender equality and the need to empower women as a force for sustainable peace. By its resolution 2253 (2015), the Council expanded the sanctions framework for the suppression of terrorist financing to formally include ISIL and condemned the abduction of women and children for sexual exploitation, trafficking and trading and to force the payment of ransoms. In January alone, ISIL extorted \$850,000 for the release of 200 abducted Yezidis, and in 2014, ransom payments to ISIL from the Yezidi community amounted to between \$35 million and \$45 million (see S/2016/92). Such evidence notwithstanding, the global discourse on and response to the issue of curbing financial flows to violent extremists are focused almost exclusively on such considerations as the sale of oil and antiquities. The fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in June

2016, will provide an opportunity to anchor new understandings in an expansive global framework.

21. Despite such policy developments, conflict-related sexual violence committed by violent extremist and terrorist groups such as ISIL, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Ansar Eddine, the Taliban and Al-Qaida continues unabated. ISIL describes the capture and enslavement of “infidel” women and children as an inevitable consequence of its conquest of new territory and seeks to regulate and codify sexual slavery, as expressed in its fatwa No. 64, of 29 January 2015. This continues the explicit justification of sexual enslavement presented in its pamphlet of December 2014 entitled “Questions and answers on taking captives and slaves”, and in volume 9 of its magazine, *Dabiq*, of May 2015. The ideological opposition of ISIL affiliates to the autonomy and education of women and girls has placed adolescent girls, primarily, at heightened risk of abduction for the purposes of sexual slavery and forced marriage. This has been particularly pronounced in north-east Nigeria, where Boko Haram continues its campaign of abduction, forced marriage and forced pregnancy. Attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups disproportionately affect women and girls, who are often targeted as the repositories of cultural identity, the relatives of perceived fighters or the bearers of future generations who will populate disputed territories.

22. It is critical, therefore, to deepen the understanding of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism and to formally recognize victims of sexual violence as victims of terrorism in order to build counter-narratives and counter-strategies and pave the way for reparations and redress. It is also critical to invest in the capacity of women’s groups to lead grass-roots efforts to counter extremism and youth radicalization. Engagement with traditional and religious leaders, who can help to shift the shame and stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators, is vital to ensuring that extremists do not win the underlying battle of ideas. This includes negating attempts to legitimize rape on religious terms. Efforts to counter violent extremism must not compromise women’s rights, but rather empower women as part of efforts to foster resilient families and communities, as called for by the Security Council in resolution 2178 (2014) on addressing the terrorist threat.

IV. Sexual violence in conflict-affected settings

Afghanistan

23. The fall of Kunduz city, in northern Afghanistan, which was attacked by Taliban forces on 28 September and remained partially under their control until 13 October, caused widespread chaos and fear. The Taliban conducted house searches using a list of human rights defenders, including women’s rights defenders, journalists and the staff of non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and the Government. Those searches, combined with active fighting in the city, reports of the abduction of women and allegations of sexual violence, caused the mass displacement of civilians and the suspension of some essential services for women, including shelters and health care in several adjacent provinces. Despite the severe access and security constraints impeding documentation, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) considers the allegations of an abduction of a woman and the killing of two women to be credible. The emergence of ISIL affiliates in eastern Afghanistan also caused some families to either flee or

confine women and girls to their homes. Multiple sources have expressed concerns about sexual violence, and continued monitoring and investigation are required.

24. Rising insecurity and the fear of repercussions exacerbate the underreporting of sexual violence by impeding access to services, especially in areas controlled by anti-Government elements. Under the law, there remains a conflation of rape with adultery, which means that the complainant herself may face a criminal charge. National institutions are ill-equipped to respond to cases of sexual violence, and women represent less than 2 per cent of the Afghan national police. UNAMA documented 55 incidents of sexual violence against women and girls, 7 of which were committed by parties to the conflict, including the police, anti-Government elements, members of a pro-Government group and the Taliban. Between March 2014 and March 2015, national institutions recorded 169 cases of rape, although the Government's report does not mention a link with conflict in any of the cases. The United Nations remains concerned about boys recruited by armed groups in Afghanistan, who may be at risk of sexual abuse, and by ongoing reports of the practice of *bachah-bazi*, involving "dancing boys", which may include sexual violence and the enslavement of boys by men in positions of power. In June, the Government launched its first national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Recommendation

25. I urge the authorities to ensure the safety of service providers, human rights defenders and monitors and to address the lack of accessible services for women and girls. I call upon the Government and all parties to the conflict to make the protection and empowerment of women central considerations in any peace process; to counter messages of intimidation by ISIL affiliates, the Taliban and other groups; and to ensure that sexual violence is clearly defined and criminalized in the Penal Code. I also urge that legislation prohibiting the practice of *bachah-bazi* be swiftly adopted.

Central African Republic

26. Concerns regarding conflict-related sexual violence became particularly acute in late 2015, given the political unrest. During that period, many women and girls were in need of assistance, and many service providers were forced to suspend their operations. Intercommunal conflict, poverty, displacement and a climate of impunity reinforced gender inequality and placed women and girls at heightened risk. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) verified 79 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, 36 involving the rape of minors, committed by former Séléka, anti-balaka and Lord's Resistance Army elements; armed youth and self-defence groups; and gendarmes and the police. Service providers recorded 29,801 cases of gender-based violence more broadly, including rape, sexual assault and sexual slavery. Of the survivors, 27,977 were women and girls and 1,824 were men and boys. A total of 44 per cent of cases involved gang rapes, often committed in front of family members. Rape has been used to punish women suspected of trading with people on the other side of the sectarian divide. The pre-disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, launched in 2015, revealed that a number of children associated with armed groups had been subjected to sexual violence. There was also a disturbing pattern of

sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers, with the MINUSCA Conduct and Discipline Team addressing 23 cases.

27. The absence of a functioning justice system, combined with the fear of retaliation and the pressure placed on survivors and their families by the perpetrators, continue to deter reporting. Evidence has emerged of forced marriage as a negative coping mechanism to "protect the victims' honour". Those who report to service providers often come forward very late, sometimes a year or more after the incident. Survivors experience rejection by their families and communities, in particular when they are pregnant. Children born as a result of rape are rarely accepted by society, and a high number of rape victims resort to unsafe abortion, which is the leading cause of maternal mortality. Many public structures charge fees for medical services and certificates, which renders them inaccessible to the indigent. Sexual violence against men and boys has been shrouded in cultural taboos. Accordingly, a neutral term for gender-based violence crisis centres has been adopted, namely listening centres, and male staff have been employed. In 2015, 1,128 boys and 969 men accessed gender-based violence services.

28. Reports emerged of married women being abducted from their homes and forced to marry former Séléka fighters, and allegations arose of women and girls being used as sex slaves by anti-balaka elements. Conflict-related sexual violence is both a cause and a consequence of displacement, and most incidents are reported during flight. For example, women sought refuge in host families and sites for internally displaced persons following a series of rapes in connection with armed attacks in villages along the Mbrès and Ouandago axis. More than 447,000 people have been internally displaced, and sex has been demanded from women fleeing war zones as a form of "payment of passage". Sexual assaults are so frequent when internally displaced persons leave displacement sites that United Nations agencies have begun distributing warning kits to women, which contain flashlights and whistles to alert local protection committees in the case of emergency. The law establishing a special criminal court with jurisdiction over grave human rights violations was promulgated in June 2015. Efforts are under way, including by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence remains central to the court's undertakings. Following the signing in January 2015 of a presidential decree establishing a rapid response unit within the police and the gendarmerie to combat sexual violence, the Team, in coordination with MINUSCA, was deployed to provide technical advice to the Government to make it operational. The Team also supported the training of military prosecutors through the regional training centre of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Although the justice system is largely non-functional, on 18 September an anti-balaka fighter was sentenced to five years imprisonment for rape. Parties to the conflict participated in the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation, held in May, at which women's organizations called for action to end impunity for sexual violence.

Recommendation

29. I encourage the authorities to operationalize the joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence and to establish the special criminal court to exercise jurisdiction over grave violations of international law.

Colombia

30. Peace talks between the Government and FARC-EP made welcome progress in 2015, and a breakthrough agreement was reached on 15 December on truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition for victims of the conflict. The agreement provides for a comprehensive transitional justice process, which includes a truth commission that recognizes the disproportionate impact of conflict and conflict-related sexual violence on women, and a special jurisdiction for peace, which identifies sexual violence as a grave crime for which amnesty cannot be granted. Following the creation of the unique structure of a gender subcommission in September 2014, leaders of women's rights and sexual diversity groups, as well as survivors of sexual violence, participated in the talks. The United Nations supported national and regional forums to ensure that the voices of more than 3,000 civilians were included in the process. My Special Representative visited Colombia in February and Havana in March, and called upon the parties to place gender justice and the eradication of conflict-related sexual violence at the centre of the peace process. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has supported the Government's legislative reform efforts and the development of guidelines for the military and the police.

31. In January 2015, the Constitutional Court issued an order in which it emphasized the persistence of conflict-related sexual violence and urged the authorities to address the structural factors that perpetuated such crimes. Although the judicial authorities have committed themselves to according priority to such cases, few charges have thus far resulted in convictions. Significantly, in February, sentences for conflict-related sexual violence were issued against "Cuco" Vanoy, "La Mona" and five other former paramilitary members.

32. The gaps in data due to underreporting notwithstanding, conflict-related sexual violence is considered to be a widespread risk in at least 10 departments of Colombia, predominantly areas under the influence of armed groups. In addition, incidents and threats of sexual violence have been reported against women leaders and activists and those associated with armed groups. Cases of forced prostitution, sexual slavery and trafficking in persons were documented. Those at risk include indigenous groups, Colombians of African descent, girls residing in remote areas and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Service providers reported 1,973 cases of gender-based violence in 2015, and the perpetrators included post-demobilization and other armed groups and, in some cases, members of the Colombian armed forces. The National Victims' Unit registered 103 cases of conflict-related sexual violence between January and December 2015, with armed groups identified as responsible for 46 per cent of such cases. Men were recorded as victims in 3 per cent of cases, and women of African descent or indigenous women were targeted in 30 per cent of cases. The Unit awarded reparations to 5,488 sexual violence survivors. However, despite such exemplary commitment, a gap remains between the robust normative framework and the institutional capacity for its implementation, including for psychosocial assistance and services for survivors in remote areas.

Recommendation

33. I commend the parties on the progress made in the peace process and urge them to continue to ensure that gender and conflict-related sexual violence

considerations remain central to the implementation of the agreement. At this critical juncture, it is essential to ensure adequate capacity for a continued monitoring of violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, which can undermine peace and reconciliation. I welcome the Government's willingness to work with my Special Representative and her Team of Experts and to share good practices with other conflict-affected countries.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

34. During the reporting period, data collected by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), UNFPA and UNHCR each show a decline in incidents of conflict-related sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the United Nations remains cautious as to the interpretation and completeness of those data, which are likely to be affected by underreporting and limited access. MONUSCO verified 637 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, of which 375 victims were women and 262 were girls. The majority of perpetrators were from armed groups, which were responsible for 74 per cent of the cases, compared with 69 per cent in 2014. Government security forces were responsible for the remaining 26 per cent of confirmed incidents. The FARDC was the main perpetrator on the side of the Government and was responsible for cases involving 133 victims. The national police was implicated in cases concerning 28 victims. UNFPA recorded 1,900 cases of conflict-related sexual violence by armed perpetrators in North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema provinces, as well as the former provinces of Orientale and Katanga. UNHCR data identified South Kivu as the province most affected in 2015, followed by North Kivu and the former province of Orientale, which were most affected in 2014. According to UNHCR, more than one third of victims are internally displaced persons, refugees or returnees. In March 2015 alone, five attacks in which women were raped took place against internally displaced persons sites.

35. Although there are signs of progress, conflict-related sexual violence remains prevalent, with a reported incident of mass rape by national forces. A unit of FARDC soldiers was also allegedly involved in the rape of at least 12 women during a cordon-and-search operation in the Kalehe territory of South Kivu, conducted between 20 and 22 September 2015. The Government has launched an investigation. On the side of the armed groups, Raia Mutomboki factions, predominantly based in the Shabunda area of South Kivu, are responsible for 16 incidents recorded by MONUSCO and have targeted their attacks against civilians in villages and mining sites, including in an incident of mass rape during the night of 1 to 2 May 2015. The Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI), in Ituri province, were responsible for 22 per cent of cases verified by MONUSCO. Failed negotiations between the Government and FRPI led to the disintegration of the group into fragmented units, which attacked and terrorized villages in southern Irumu territory. Another group, Mai Mai Simba Manu, repeatedly raided mining sites and villages in Mambassa territory in Ituri province and Lubero territory in North Kivu. These attacks were accompanied by high levels of sexual violence, with 17 women raped in a single attack. Elements of the Forces démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) were responsible for 9 per cent of all conflict-related sexual violence incidents. Despite a de-escalation of the Batwa-Baluba conflict in the former province of Katanga, UNHCR registered 171 victims of sexual assault, perpetrated primarily by Batwa militiamen.

36. Sexual violence against children remains distressingly high, accounting for 41 per cent of all cases, a figure that stood at 48 per cent in 2014. A United Nations report on girls associated with armed groups between 2009 and 2015 described incidents of forced marriage and sexual slavery committed by the Allied Democratic Forces, noting that approximately one third of those girls had been subjected to sexual violence. A pattern of extreme violence against children in Kavumu, South Kivu, involving kidnapping and rape, has been exacerbated by impunity.

37. The Government continued to work closely with my Special Representative. In December 2015, the President delivered a national address in which he pledged zero tolerance for sexual violence, and his personal representative on sexual violence launched a campaign to improve victims' access to justice and services. In March 2015, FARDC inaugurated a commission to oversee its action plan against sexual violence. In 50 conflict-related sexual violence trials, 109 members of the security forces were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of between 1 and 20 years. The United Nations continues to provide holistic support for survivors by embedding legal clinics and psychosocial services in medical facilities. Military justice authorities and the special police for the protection of women and children also continue to combat sexual violence in a challenging context. MONUSCO and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict assisted the FARDC in the implementation of its action plan, resulting in the issuance of command orders prohibiting sexual violence and the signing by 30 commanders of documents aimed at addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

38. Many of the perpetrators of the Walikale mass rape involving 387 victims, and for which the Security Council urged swift prosecution in 2010, remain active in the conflict today. Likewise, the alleged perpetrators of the mass rapes in Bushani and Kalambahiro in 2010 and 2011 have yet to be brought to justice. Judgments, including the award of reparations to victims of sexual violence issued by Congolese courts and for which the Government is liable, remain unpaid. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict is assisting in the development of a prosecutorial strategy for the backlog of emblematic sexual violence incidents and the establishment of mechanisms for the protection of victims and witnesses. The Team of Experts also continued to provide support during mobile court sessions by embedding experts in the MONUSCO Prosecution Support Cells in Goma.

Recommendation

39. I urge the Government to sustain its efforts to combat impunity by bringing perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence to justice, including at senior levels, and by ensuring full implementation of the armed forces action plan. I further recommend that the authorities ensure the prompt delivery of services and reparations to victims, including the execution of outstanding compensation awards.

Iraq

40. First-hand accounts of sexual violence continue to be received from displaced persons who have fled areas controlled by ISIL, as well as those rescued from captivity. Secondary accounts, which have been received by family and community members who are in contact with Iraqi women and girls remaining in ISIL captivity in Mosul, Tall'Afar and Raqqah, corroborate the use of sexual violence. On

26 April, the ISIL leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued a "fatwa" in which he ordered the separation of Yazidi children from their mothers. Children as young as 2 years of age were transferred to the Madrasa Jihadia, and those over 10 years of age were sent to the Jihadia Institute in Tall'Afar. The women were then transferred within Iraq and to the Syrian Arab Republic and presented to so-called "emirs" for sexual exploitation. This advanced the strategy adopted by ISIL of separating families in order to more easily control the population and address the shortage of women at the disposal of their fighters in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. ISIL has incorporated sexual violence into its systems of punishment and reward: during Ramadan, it ran a competition on memorizing the Koran, with the winners being promised Yazidi sex slaves as a prize. There are also concerns that sexual violence has been used by the Mahdi Army and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, in the governorates of Salah al-Din, Diyala, Basrah and Baghdad, during 2014 and 2015. The Office of my Special Representative received testimony from survivors and other primary sources of rape, sexual harassment and sexual torture, in addition to restrictions imposed on women's rights and freedoms. The incidents mainly took place following abductions from public streets, during house searches and in ad hoc detention facilities, and included the torture of men and boys.

41. In displacement settings, threats of sexual violence persist, including sexual exploitation and child marriage. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable: most are out of school and many have been forced into early marriage. Humanitarian actors have struggled to reach areas with the highest concentrations of internally displaced persons, such as the Anbar, Ninawa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates, owing to access constraints. Sexual and reproductive health services, trauma counselling and reintegration support are severely limited. There is a shortage of staff trained in the clinical management of rape and a dire need for safe houses and shelters for abused or at-risk women, with only three such shelters in the Kurdistan region and none in south or central Iraq. The Government has expressed its willingness to address conflict-related sexual violence and facilitated the visit of my Special Representative to the country in April 2015. However, specific areas of intervention and cooperation have not yet been agreed upon.

Recommendation

42. I call upon the authorities to adopt measures to tackle conflict-related sexual violence, as discussed during the visit of my Special Representative, including programmes to support the social reintegration of women and girls released from ISIL captivity; safe houses, shelters and community-based medical and psychosocial care; and engagement with religious and civil society leaders to curb extremism. Efforts to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system through the deployment of women's protection advisers should be accelerated.

Libya

43. Continued armed confrontations across Libya and the expansion of terrorist groups have exacerbated the plight of civilians, in particular in Benghazi, Darnah and Sirte. Violent extremist groups, such as ISIL and Ansar al-Sharia, are consolidating their positions, with reports of forced marriage to their fighters and the imposition of draconian regulations on women. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIL have, in some cases, subjected forcibly recruited boys to sexual violence (see A/HRC/31/47).

44. Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, in particular foreign women, face a heightened risk of conflict-related sexual violence. Two gang rapes of migrant women were recorded in November, purportedly by armed groups and the police. Migrants interviewed by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) also reported witnessing women awaiting departure to Europe being taken away at night for the presumed purpose of sexual abuse by smugglers in "connection houses" in western Libya.

45. All parties continued to commit violations that potentially fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. OHCHR documented the case of a woman who was abducted in Tripoli and repeatedly raped by the leader of an armed group for more than six months. She reported witnessing six girls who were also raped by members of the group during that time. When she eventually managed to escape, she was pregnant and underwent an abortion in a third country. Sexual violence has also been reported in the context of official and unofficial detention and as committed by the police, armed groups and criminal organizations. Women, men and children are not held separately in detention and, in some cases, women have been subjected to strip and cavity searches by male guards. A female medical professional reported to UNSMIL that an armed man receiving treatment sexually assaulted her on 18 May in the hospital where she worked. The survivor noted that a number of similar incidents perpetrated by armed men against female staff were going unreported owing to the climate of impunity. The limited participation of women in the political dialogue remains an impediment to reaching a lasting, inclusive peace. There is still no functioning transitional justice mechanism, and the Libyan Foundation for Victims of Sexual Violence, established in 2014, is not yet operational.

Recommendation

46. I call upon the authorities to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence crimes are duly investigated, the perpetrators brought to justice and services and reparations provided to victims, in line with Decree No. 119 (2014). I also call upon the Constitution Drafting Assembly to ensure that gender equality principles are reflected in the new Constitution. I urge all parties to provide monitors with unhindered access to places of detention.

Mali

47. The inter-Malian dialogue concluded on 20 June 2015 with the signing of an agreement on peace and reconciliation in Mali by the Government, the Plateforme and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), which precludes amnesty for sexual violence. However, volatility in the north, combined with sociocultural inhibitions and fear of reprisals, continues to restrict reporting of sexual violence. Survivors often resist filing legal complaints or seeking care owing to a lack of confidence in the institutional response and instances of pressure placed on victims and their families not to pursue justice.

48. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) reported 25 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and attempted rape against 9 girls and 16 women. A total of 6 of the cases were allegedly perpetrated by elements of the Malian defence and security forces, 14 by elements of the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés

(GATIA), 1 by a member of Ganda Izo, 2 by members of the Coalition du peuple de l'Azawad and the others by unidentified armed elements. The incidents occurred in the regions of Mopti, Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao, and most of the victims were members of the Tuareg community. Service providers recorded 89 cases of conflict-related sexual violence involving 80 women, 8 girls and 1 man. A total of 7 of these cases were allegedly committed by the Malian defence and security forces, 39 by members of the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), 38 by armed men whose affiliation could not be established and 5 by MINUSMA peacekeepers. Those cases allegedly committed by MINUSMA peacekeepers were referred to the Conduct and Discipline Team.

49. Patterns of conflict-related sexual violence were observed during the occupation of Ménaka, in the Gao region, and Anéfis, in the Kidal region, by GATIA elements. In Ménaka, sexual violence was deliberately directed against the wives and daughters of CMA members. Similarly, in Anéfis, reports of conflict-related sexual violence against local women coincided with the military occupation by GATIA, which is a party to the peace agreement. In Timbuktu, local sources indicate an increase in sexual violence since the installation of the Coalition du peuple de l'Azawad in July 2015, including the rape in September of a woman and girl at gunpoint while travelling on public transport, allegedly by elements of the Coalition.

50. Members of the Malian defence and security forces hierarchy continue to obstruct investigations, including by redeploying alleged perpetrators to theatres of conflict. Legal proceedings have progressed in relation to 19 of the 80 cases allegedly committed by violent extremist groups in 2012, and a protection trust fund has been established to support sexual violence survivors during these investigations. A total of 23 cases of sexual violence, also dating back to 2012, were filed in Bamako on 6 March 2015 against 15 suspects. One of the suspects, Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, is currently on trial at the International Criminal Court. Malian women's groups have objected to the exclusion of sexual violence charges from his indictment, which was focused only on the destruction of cultural property. In August 2015, the Mauritanian authorities released Sidi Mohamed Ould Mohamed Ould Bouamama, despite his indictment for alleged atrocities, including conflict-related sexual violence, in 2012. In September 2015, political leaders of the Plateforme issued a statement of commitment to further engage their military and political wings in efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence and to work with MINUSMA towards an action plan. During its deployment to Mali in June 2015, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict engaged with the judicial authorities on addressing the backlog of conflict-related sexual violence cases, and with the bar association of Bamako on the provision of free legal aid.

Recommendation

51. I call for women to be fully and meaningfully represented and gender expertise to be embedded in the monitoring and implementation committees of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and urge the Government to adopt a law for the protection of victims and witnesses.

Myanmar

52. The process of political reform in Myanmar presents an opportunity for advancing women's rights and combating conflict-related sexual violence. The inclusion of sexual violence in the nationwide ceasefire agreement, signed by the Government and eight ethnic groups on 15 October 2015, is a promising sign. In particular, the stipulation that armed forces and groups must not commit any form of sexual violence and that women must be represented in political dialogue provides a foundation for addressing sexual and gender-based violence. However, there continue to be serious concerns about impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Military justice lacks transparency, despite the Defence Services Act (1959), which provides for the transfer of cases of rape by military personnel to civilian courts. Moreover, State health practitioners continue to request a police report before authorizing the provision of medical care to rape survivors, contributing to a rise in unsafe abortions and maternal mortality. This practice persists despite the requirement under the Emergency Treatment of Patients Law (2014) that service providers ensure access to life-saving medical care.

53. Sexual violence has been exacerbated by conflict and displacement, notably in Kachin and northern Shan States, linked to the collapse of social protection mechanisms, the increased presence of armed actors, and military camps in proximity to civilian centres. Fear of reporting, which is generally due to shame and cultural narratives that define women's issues as "unspoken" issues, is greater when crimes are committed by members of armed groups, given the risk of retaliation. When traditional mechanisms are used, "reparation marriages" of the victim to the perpetrator may be ordered, which deters reporting. A rise in trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced marriage was noted, with 45 cases recorded early in 2015. Stateless women and those who lacked identity documents were at greatest risk, including while travelling on crowded boats and staying in smugglers' camps. In 2015, six alleged rapes by members of the armed forces were reported, though the actual number is believed to be much higher. The gender-based violence subcluster provided services to over 600 women and girls in 2015 in both government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas of Kachin and Rakhine States. Approximately 20 cases of sexual violence are recorded per month. On average, just 2 per cent of survivors choose to pursue legal redress, and just 4 per cent opt to access health services, in line with the perceived requirement that victims must first report to the police.

Recommendation

54. I encourage the Government to adopt a comprehensive law to address violence against women and to uniformly enforce the Defence Services Act (1959) so that military perpetrators can be prosecuted transparently.

Somalia

55. Conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread throughout Somalia and affects displaced women and girls in particular, who comprised 74 per cent of the victims recorded in 2015 and 81 per cent in 2014. It serves as a tool to punish and assert dominance in the context of inter-clan conflicts, military offensives, displacement and forced evictions, with women from minority clans exposed to the greatest risk. In areas held by Al-Shabaab, a range of violations continue, including

a practice called "dumaashhi", which involves the claiming of new brides by fighters (see S/2015/801). Between January and June 2015, service providers recorded 2,901 cases of rape and 1,007 cases of gang rape. During the same period, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) documented 14 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls, noting that a lack of outreach and response avenues had exacerbated underreporting. This became evident given the rise in reporting that occurred following the establishment of a hotline sponsored by a non-governmental organization, which received 73 sexual violence cases in October alone. The majority of these were attributed to the Somali National Army, with most taking place in the Bakool or Shabelle Hoose regions. Arrests were made in 56 cases, although it is unclear whether they have led to prosecution. The judicial process is complicated by local power dynamics, the politicization of cases and victims being required to pay fees to the police.

56. Services are severely limited, with a weak legislative framework and insufficient access to justice perpetuating a climate of impunity. Efforts undertaken during the reporting period included outreach to 9,315 women and girls for psychosocial support, legal assistance and medical care provided by UNICEF and its partners. UNSOM and UNDP are helping the Somali police to establish specialized units to address violence against women and children. With support from UNFPA, police, prosecutors, judges, legal aid providers, and civil society organizations were trained on the multisectoral response to sexual violence. UNSOM is supporting the delivery of conflict-related sexual violence scenario-specific training of trainers to the Somali national army, targeting recently recruited and integrated forces. A protocol for the clinical management of rape has been developed, and a forensic facility is being established to improve evidence for prosecution. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict assisted in strengthening the provisions of the draft bill on sexual offences, which is pending adoption, and helped to build the capacity of Somali military prosecutors.

Recommendation

57. I encourage the Government to adopt the pending bill on sexual offences and implement the commitments made in its national action plan to combat sexual violence in conflict, of 2013, including training and accountability measures for the army and police.

South Sudan

58. The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed in August 2015, yet the situation remains volatile. Sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war with a brutality that points to its ethnic, as well as political, undertones. In addition to recurrent intercommunal fighting, new armed groups have emerged, such as those of General Martin Konji and Major General Johnson Olony, as well as youth militias. Militarization, arms proliferation and the rule of law vacuum, have triggered an escalation of violence. Sexual violence has been employed in a widespread and systematic manner by all parties in the course of military offensives and counter-offensives. The majority of incidents recorded were committed in Unity State by SPLA and associated militias.

59. UNMISS documented 194 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence by parties to the conflict, involving at least 280 victims. Service providers documented 266 cases of rape: 96 per cent of the victims were female, and 25 per cent were children. Among the alleged perpetrators, 4 per cent were members of the national police, and 17 per cent were affiliated with armed groups. One of the most egregious incidents of conflict-related sexual violence took place in July 2015 in Unity State, where offensives launched by SPLA in Koch County included the rape and gang rape of at least 30 women and girls, some of whom were later burned alive in their tukuls. One survivor stated, "If you look them in the face when they are doing it, they will kill you". A witness in Leer County reported that assaulting women and girls was considered a form of "practice" for soldiers. UNMISS recorded the case of a woman who was gang raped by four SPLA soldiers. Thereafter, she witnessed other women subjected to the same ordeal as a form of reprisal when SPLM/A-IO reclaimed the village. Following attacks by SPLA and affiliates, boys were reportedly found sexually mutilated. Between May and June 2015, SPLA soldiers, often intoxicated, committed sexual assaults and "assigned" women to fighters. An older displaced woman was repeatedly assaulted by SPLA soldiers who entered her home in search of food and money. Abducted women and girls have also been forced to carry loot, as well as cook, brew alcohol and transport wounded soldiers. In Juba in February 2015, a displaced Nuer woman reported being forced to "marry" an SPLA soldier. This followed the murder of her husband and 10 other Nuer soldiers by members of SPLA, who then forced their widows into sexual slavery. In September 2015 in Central Equatoria State, SPLA soldiers reportedly raped several pupils returning home from school and held a mother in sexual slavery in their barracks. In November, in Eastern Equatoria State, two girls and an older woman were reportedly gang raped by SPLA soldiers.

60. Women and children were subjected to sexual violence when entering and leaving sites for the protection of civilians, notably in Bentiu and Malakal. On 14 May, 11 displaced women were reportedly abducted by SPLA soldiers in Bentiu. In Leer, a mother of four was gang raped by five soldiers on the roadside in front of her children, following which two other soldiers dragged her into the bush and raped her. This incident spread fear among female internally displaced persons, causing them to restrict their movements, impeding critical livelihood activities. As a consequence, some have resorted to exchanging sex with male internally displaced persons to obtain basic supplies. UNMISS has taken measures to mitigate these threats by patrolling high-risk zones and facilitating the supply of firewood and fuel. In the protection of civilian sites themselves, rape and attempted rape have been reported, and there are concerns about unsafe, self-administered abortions, with fetuses being found in latrines. Nationwide, the capacity for the clinical management of rape remains low, with greater efforts needed to extend medical, legal and psychosocial support to survivors. The weakness of the justice system contributes to a reliance on traditional mechanisms, which generally do not treat rape as a crime and under which forced marriage is routinely prescribed as a "remedy".

61. My Special Representative continues to engage with the leaders of both parties, namely the President, Salva Kiir, and the SPLM/A-IO leader, Riek Machar. In line with the joint communiqué signed by the Government in October 2014, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in coordination with UNMISS, assisted in the drafting of an implementation plan. The

Government has since established a joint technical working group to oversee implementation. On 26 May 2015, the Minister of Defence and Veterans' Affairs issued a ministerial order to prohibit the use of sexual violence by SPLA. In coordination with UNMISS, the Team of Experts provided support to SPLM/A-IO in the development of an implementation plan for the communiqué issued by Riek Machar in December 2014. The focus of this plan is on accountability and the protection of victims, witnesses and service providers. Pursuant to this, in October 2015, 53 SPLM/A-IO commanders, including Lieutenant General John Buth Teny, commander of the Pagak operational base, as well as four major generals, six brigadier generals and nine colonels, signed undertakings that reinforced their individual and command responsibility for preventing and punishing conflict-related sexual violence. SPLM/A-IO will also establish a special investigation and documentation unit to enhance accountability.

Recommendation

62. I urge both parties to accelerate the implementation of the commitments made under their respective communiqués on conflict-related sexual violence, and I call for the operationalization of special protection units on sexual and gender-based violence in the police.

Sudan (Darfur)

63. Conflict-related sexual violence remains of grave concern in Darfur, where patterns of ethnically motivated sexual violence as a means of punishment, persecution and forced displacement have been noted for 12 years. It has also been more than a decade since the Security Council referred the situation to the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including systematic rape. The threat and terror of sexual violence, which is linked with the prevailing insecurity and lawlessness, looms large over everyday life, restricting women's mobility. A total of 53 per cent of recorded sexual assaults occur when victims venture to isolated areas to farm or collect firewood.

64. In 2015, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) documented 80 cases of conflict-related sexual violence involving 105 victims, who ranged from 5 to 45 years of age, with minors constituting 53 per cent. All were female, with the exception of one male victim, and 47 per cent were internally displaced persons. One victim was killed following the rape, and many others sustained grave physical injuries, with 32 per cent of the cases being gang rapes. UNAMID acknowledges that the available data do not reflect the actual magnitude of violations, owing to stigma, fear of reprisals, the limited presence of law enforcement and a denial of access to places of alleged violence. In Central Darfur, allegations of mass rape following attacks by the Rapid Support Forces on Golo in January 2015 have been raised with the Government, but little progress has been made in gaining access to the area in order to corroborate the accounts. Moreover, allegations of the mass rape of an estimated 200 women and girls over a period of 36 hours beginning on 30 October 2014 by the Sudanese armed forces in Tabit, North Darfur, have still not been impartially investigated or appropriately addressed.

65. Some 40 per cent of conflict-related sexual violence cases centred around North Darfur, where attacks against civilians continued despite the enhanced

security measures introduced by the newly appointed wali (governor) in June. A 15-year-old girl and a 27-year-old woman were raped by assailants identified as armed Arab men in uniform during an attack on their village by the Sudanese military on 19 and 20 January. The highest number of documented incidents occurred in January, coinciding with military operations by the Government in and around west Jebel Marra. A significant number of cases corresponded to the onset of the migratory season for armed Arab herdsmen and the farming season for displaced and local civilians. A total of 80 per cent of the perpetrators of sexual violence were described as being armed men. On 16 September, a 14-year-old displaced girl was raped in front of her mother and uncle by an armed man while farming in Southern Darfur. In another flagrant case, on 13 May, armed men raped a bride and her sister on their way to the wedding, in the company of relatives and neighbours. A total of 15 per cent of cases were attributed to members of the national security apparatus, including the Sudanese armed forces, while men in civilian attire, both armed and unarmed, were identified as the perpetrator in 23 per cent of cases. In the remaining instances, perpetrators were either unidentified or a civilian known to the victim. Some victims indicated that their attackers were associated with proxy forces supported by the Government, or were armed men in military uniform. The identification of such men is complicated, however, by the fact that military uniforms can be purchased at local markets. UNAMID and the United Nations country team have enhanced their interaction with communities and have tailored patrolling schedules to the livelihood activities of women and girls. UNICEF continued to support family and child protection units in Darfur, and UNFPA distributed rape kits through the Ministry of Health.

66. In 2015, 45 cases involving 69 victims were reported to law enforcement officials, with investigations undertaken in only 19 of the cases. This resulted in 13 arrests, and 8 of those cases proceeded to trial. In 2014, 63 incidents reported to the police resulted in just two convictions. Many cases are not reported as a result of weak institutions, community pressure and fear of reprisals. In addition, the outlawed but still widely upheld requirement that victims obtain a "form 8" from the police in order to receive medical care deters reporting. Even when there is adequate evidence, the police do not consistently pursue formal prosecutions for rape, leaving communities to resort to traditional justice. For example, a 16-year-old displaced girl was raped by a police officer while gathering firewood on 13 May near Khamsa Dagaig camp. A complaint was filed, but the investigation was discontinued and the suspect released pursuant to a traditional settlement, which decreed that he should marry the victim. In an effort to extend the reach of the law, the Ministry of Justice appointed new prosecutors in all the states of Darfur in 2015 and deployed police to new areas in North Darfur. In February, the Criminal Act of 1991 was amended to include a definition of rape that is in line with international standards, and UNAMID and UNDP are supporting the establishment of a victim and witness protection programme.

Recommendation

67. I urge the Government to ensure timely, unhindered access for United Nations personnel to affected communities and to strengthen rule of law institutions. I reiterate my call for the Government to engage with my Special Representative to develop a framework of cooperation to address this long-standing concern.

Syrian Arab Republic

68. As the Syrian conflict enters its sixth year, sexual violence continues to be systematically used as a tactic of warfare, torture and terrorism. It has been most commonly reported in the context of house searches and hostage-taking, in detention and at checkpoints, by State and pro-Government forces, and in areas controlled by ISIL and other non-State groups. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic reported in September that women, men and children continued to be subjected to sexual violence by Government personnel at checkpoints and in detention (see A/HRC/30/48). The United Nations received accounts of the systematic sexual torture of men in detention centres, including rape with wooden sticks, and electric shocks to, and burning of, genitals. Such sexual torture was aimed at obtaining confessions of the men's involvement in alleged anti-Government activities. In some cases, female relatives were also arrested and forced to witness the torture.

69. ISIL continues to hold women and girls from the Iraqi Yazidi community and other minority groups in sexual slavery in the Syrian Arab Republic on the basis of their ethnic and religious identity. Women and girls from targeted minorities have been sold, traded, gifted to fighters, trafficked and held for ransom. ISIL has also forced Sunni women and girls into marriage with its fighters. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons have been targeted for physical and sexual assault on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, notably at checkpoints controlled by groups such as ISIL and the Nusra Front, as well as in detention.

70. The majority of internally displaced persons are women and children, who face serious risks of sexual exploitation. Adolescent girls and women who are heads of household are particularly at risk. In interviews with female refugees in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, fear of rape is cited as a major factor inducing flight from the Syrian Arab Republic. Tragically, many refugees and asylum seekers face renewed risks of sexual violence, including forced prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes by criminal elements. Both inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in neighbouring countries, child marriage is often used as a negative coping strategy. In some contexts, displaced and refugee women lack residency and work permits in their own name and are therefore at risk of exploitation. Syrian women encounter serious challenges in attempting to register their children and face long-term social and security implications as a result.

Recommendation

71. I acknowledge the opportunity provided by the Government to my Special Representative to visit the Syrian Arab Republic in March 2015 and call upon the authorities, further to that visit, to agree upon specific measures to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, including by members of the national security forces, and to immediately release women and children detained without charge. I call upon all parties to take measures to prevent sexual violence and to ensure the full participation of women in the peace process. I commend countries hosting Syrian refugees for their support to this vulnerable population and call upon them to adopt protection measures to mitigate the risk of sexual violence.

Yemen

72. The situation in Yemen continued to deteriorate in 2015; over 80 per cent of the population required humanitarian assistance; and women and children represented the vast majority of the 2.5 million internally displaced persons. More than 30 per cent of displaced households are headed by women, a notable increase from 9 per cent before the current crisis. A significant number of men nationwide have joined the fighting, leaving women and children in areas exposed to violence. There are few medical professionals trained to respond to sexual violence and no national guidelines on the clinical management of rape. In 2015, 5,866 cases of gender-based violence, including rape, sexual harassment and early marriage, were reported. OHCHR documented an incident in Sana'a during which a group of armed men forced a woman into a taxi for the purpose of sexual assault. She was later killed by her own family. The risk of "honour" crimes perpetuates the phenomenon of underreporting. During the battle to re-establish government authority in Aden, a number of men and boys were reportedly raped, although the perpetrators remain unknown. UNHCR estimates that there are 9,000 asylum seekers and 118,000 refugees in Yemen who lack social safety nets and face a high risk of sexual violence. The proliferation of ad hoc checkpoints in areas controlled by armed groups is also a risk factor for conflict-related sexual violence.

Recommendation

73. I call upon all stakeholders to take steps towards the inclusion of women in the political transition process and to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence crimes are investigated, the perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive services and reparations.

V. Addressing sexual violence crimes in post-conflict settings

Bosnia and Herzegovina

74. The social imprint of conflict-related sexual violence remains profound more than 20 years since the end of the war, with slow progress towards the establishment of a comprehensive support system for survivors. Most services are provided by civil society organizations, and the lack of official recognition and redress mechanisms further entrenches stigma. Insufficient support has been provided by the authorities for women who have children born as a result of wartime rape, although such women and children face socioeconomic marginalization. Displaced and returnee survivors of wartime rape require specific protection measures, as demonstrated by an incident in 2015 in which a survivor who testified publicly was targeted. Despite such incidents, the police does not adequately investigate allegations of threats against victims and witnesses. The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued the first-ever order for the payment of compensation in a judgment against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence in 2015, which sets an important precedent. The Peace Support Operation Training Centre continues to provide predeployment training on conflict-related sexual violence for armed forces in the region.

Recommendation

75. I urge the authorities to uphold the rights of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence to reparations, including in the form of compensation, services, economic empowerment, housing and education for children born as a result of rape, and to allocate a budget for this purpose.

Côte d'Ivoire

76. On 25 October, Côte d'Ivoire held its first presidential election since the crisis of 2010-2011, which had resulted in 3,000 deaths and the rape of more than 150 women. No recurrence of violence marred the 2015 elections, although some residual tensions and human rights concerns were raised. While an improvement in the security situation was seen during the reporting period, women and girls continue to suffer widespread sexual and gender-based violence linked with a climate of impunity, arms proliferation and an incomplete disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) documented 176 cases of rape, including 18 gang rapes, with 39 of the incidents committed against women and 137 against minors. Of these cases, 73 alleged perpetrators were arrested, but only 23 were detained on the charge of indecent assault and referred for prosecution, resulting in terms of imprisonment ranging from 2 months to 10 years. In the remaining cases, suspects were either acquitted for lack of evidence or failed to attend court, or the victim withdrew the complaint for fear of retaliation. Most victims resort to traditional mechanisms to settle cases, given that the cost of a medical certificate (\$100) is regarded as prohibitive. Despite the issuance of a waiver in 2014, in practice, medical certificates are still regarded as a prerequisite for investigation.

77. During 2015, a member of the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), 2 policemen and 10 unidentified armed men were reportedly involved in incidents of rape. The FRCI soldier raped a 2-year-old girl and was arrested, initially for indecent assault, which the judicial authorities subsequently upgraded to rape. UNOCI was unable to pursue allegations of the rape of a woman in Abidjan by two police officers, due to the reticence of the gendarmerie hierarchy to share information. The other incidents, which included the rape of minors and the gang rape of a pregnant woman, occurred in the context of armed robbery by a criminal network allegedly comprising FRCI soldiers and former combatants.

78. While progress has been made to harmonize national laws with international standards, accountability remains a major challenge. None of the perpetrators of the 196 cases of sexual violence committed between October 2010 and May 2011 and documented in the report of the National Commission of Inquiry have been brought to justice. In March 2015, 43 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence committed by both parties during the electoral crisis filed a formal complaint before the Special Investigation Unit, but investigations remain at a nascent stage. While it is significant that reparations have been awarded for those killed or injured during the political crisis, it remains to be seen how survivors of conflict-related sexual violence will benefit from this programme. The adoption of a national strategy to combat gender-based violence signals political will; however, its implementation has been stalled by the absence of a budget commensurate with its aims. The FRCI committee of national experts continued to implement its action plan on addressing conflict-related sexual violence with the technical assistance of the Team of Experts

on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and UNOCI. On 19 June 2015, 47 commanders signed a commitment to take action against sexual violence within their units, and the FRCI high command adopted a code of conduct on sexual violence for Ivorian soldiers.

Recommendation

79. I encourage the Government to fully implement the FRCI action plan to combat conflict-related sexual violence and the national strategy to combat gender-based violence by ensuring that perpetrators, including the military, police and former combatants, are held to account and survivors of sexual violence benefit from reparations, as part of the progress necessary to enable delisting from the annex to the present report.

Nepal

80. A decade after the end of the civil war, many Nepalese continue to suffer the enduring consequences of conflict-related sexual violence. Survivors face stigmatization, inadequate access to services, limited victim or witness protection and threats from their own community. The lack of official recognition of sexual violence survivors as conflict-affected persons limits their access to relief. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Nepal, established in February 2015, created a subcommittee for victims, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities and women. One commissioner expressed support for private, women-only hearings for sexual violence survivors. In October 2015, the Act to Amend Laws to End Gender Violence and Ensure Gender Equality entered into force, broadening the definition of rape and extending the 35-day statute of limitations for the filing of a complaint to 180 days. However, until the statute of limitations is revoked, the legal framework will not assist victims from the civil war era.

Recommendation

81. I encourage the Government to recognize victims of conflict-related sexual violence as conflict-affected persons, to remove barriers that may prevent them from gaining access to justice and to accelerate the second phase of its national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008).

Sri Lanka

82. The 30-year civil war in Sri Lanka disproportionately affected women, who continue to face sexual abuse and threats. The results of an investigation by OHCHR that covered the period from 2002 to 2011 highlighted the extent of the sexual violence committed in detention by the security forces against both women and men (see A/HRC/30/CRP.2). These were not isolated incidents, but rather part of a policy. Nevertheless, accountability has been limited. The conviction of four soldiers in October by the High Court of Jaffna for the rape of two women in 2010 is the first of its kind. The report further states that women living in the militarized north continue to be vulnerable to sexual violence committed by members of the armed forces. In Tamil communities, lone women who head nearly 60,000 households describe an ever-present threat of sexual exploitation by the military. In 2015, the new Government adopted an act on the protection of witnesses

and victims and a set of recommendations on preventing sexual and gender-based violence.

Recommendation

83. I call upon the Government to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence is addressed in all transitional justice processes, that multisectoral services reach survivors and that economic empowerment programmes benefit women in militarized areas who are heads of households.

VI. Other situations of concern

Burundi

84. In the context of the recent political unrest in Burundi, a pattern of sexual violence was documented on 11 and 12 December, when three military camps in Bujumbura were attacked, generating reprisals by the security forces in opposition districts. In connection with these reprisals, at least 13 sexual assaults were documented, which were allegedly committed by members of the special police unit in charge of protecting public institutions, elements of the military police, soldiers and the Imbonerakure (armed youth and other civilians supporting the security forces). The modus operandi of these attacks involve security forces entering homes, forcing male residents to leave, taking women and girls aside and raping or gang raping them. Rape victims also reported insults based on their actual or perceived political or ethnic affiliation. In an illustrative incident, on 11 December, policemen from the special unit entered a house in Mutakura, ordered the father to leave and forced the three daughters to “undress”, which is a euphemism used to refer to rape. The police returned on 14 December and again “undressed” the girls, after which the family fled the area. At least one rape survivor was detained after speaking to a journalist. Following the political crisis, UNHCR has documented 323 incidents of sexual violence, involving 264 women and 59 girls, which occurred either in Burundi or during flight. A number of women and girls attempting to flee were reportedly taken by the Imbonerakure to the Nyabisindu military camp, located in Marembo, and sexually assaulted.

Recommendation

85. I call for an investigation into reports of sexual violence, the prosecution of perpetrators; the immediate release of any women or girls detained in military camps and efforts by the authorities to ensure that survivors can safely access services and redress and that humanitarians can operate without impediment.

Nigeria

86. One year after Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, only 57 have returned. An estimated 2,000 women and girls have been abducted by Boko Haram since 2014, with many forced into sexual slavery (see S/2015/453). Such acts of sexual slavery, forced marriage and forced pregnancy could amount to war crimes and/or crimes against humanity (see A/HRC/30/67). At the internally displaced camp in Dalori, established in April 2015, more than 100 women have given birth following their escape from captivity (see *ibid.*). Several wished to terminate their pregnancies, although abortion remains illegal in Nigeria except

when the life or health of the woman is at stake. Owing to stigma and religious norms, most victims of sexual violence are reluctant to speak out and unwilling to return to their communities for fear they will be rejected as a source of "dishonour". As of June 2015, 307 women and children were enrolled in a government-run counselling, education and health-care programme. However, human rights concerns have been raised when women and children released from Boko Haram are held for prolonged periods by the security forces for screening and rehabilitation.

87. In camps and host communities, women and girls continue to face rape, forced marriage and "survival sex" to meet their families' needs. UNHCR identifies 676 households affected by sexual assault, with the highest proportion reported in Taraba, Adamawa and Borno States. Overcrowded camps, which afford limited privacy or socioeconomic opportunity, exacerbate this risk. A significant proportion of households in Adamawa, Borno and Gombe States reported cases of forced or early marriage. Progress was noted in late 2015 in the management of internally displaced persons camps, although psychosocial support and reproductive health care remain limited.

Recommendation

88. I reiterate my call for the immediate release of civilians abducted by Boko Haram and urge the authorities to assist women and girls who have survived captivity by supporting their social reintegration and providing all necessary health care and other comprehensive services, including the safe termination of pregnancies. I call for effective measures to prevent sexual violence in settings where women and girls seek refuge and to ensure that their safety and rights are considered in all counterinsurgency efforts.

VII. Recommendations

89. The information presented above underscores the need to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in order to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, transform harmful sociocultural norms and counter violent extremism. To this end, the following recommendations outline prevention and response measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels. In their implementation, I call for national leadership and responsibility, noting that the United Nations stands ready to support national authorities in their efforts.

90. I urge the Security Council:

(a) To recognize that, in addition to being employed as a tactic of war, as noted in resolution 1820 (2008), sexual violence can constitute a tactic of terrorism, as noted in resolution 2242 (2015). Accordingly, efforts to prevent and address sexual violence should be strategically aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism and terrorism;

(b) To fully integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of relevant sanctions committees, including the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh) Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and to ensure that dedicated gender and conflict-

related sexual violence expertise consistently informs the work of sanctions committees;

(c) To continue to encourage and support engagement with State and non-State parties to conflict for specific commitments and prevention plans on conflict-related sexual violence, and to systematically monitor their compliance;

(d) To ensure that any national forces listed in the annexes to my reports on conflict-related sexual violence are not accepted as troop or police contributors to peacekeeping operations until they have taken specific measures in line with resolution 2106 (2013) and have been delisted;

(e) To continue to recognize and address the nexus between trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, including by violent extremist groups, and to pursue accountability and sanctions for individuals and entities involved in trafficking for the purposes of sexual violence;

(f) To employ the means at its disposal to influence both State and non-State parties to conflict to comply with international law, including by referring matters to the International Criminal Court. Referrals should apply to individuals who commit, command or condone by failing to prevent or punish, sexual violence, and should entail a structured relationship of cooperation, follow-up and support to the work of the Court;

(g) To give due consideration to the risk factors and early warning signs of sexual violence in its monitoring of conflict situations, especially in relation to periods of political instability, elections, civil strife and mass population movements, such as forced displacement, and to monitor the use of inflammatory rhetoric or media incitement to sexual and other forms of violence against women in situations of concern;

(h) To use its periodic field visits to focus attention on conflict-related sexual violence concerns, to solicit the views of affected communities, women's civil society organizations and associations of survivors, as appropriate, and to draw attention to the risks faced by minorities and marginalized groups.

91. I encourage Member States, donors and regional organizations:

(a) To ensure that survivors benefit from relief and recovery programmes, including health care, psychosocial care and socioeconomic reintegration and livelihood support. Services should include provision for women with children born as a result of wartime rape;

(b) To put in place legislative and institutional arrangements to address conflict-related sexual violence and prevent its recurrence, including specific victim and witness protection laws and programmes; timely and consistent sentences that serve as a deterrent; reparations for victims; safeguards to prevent individuals accused of violations from being retained and promoted within the security forces (vetting in the context of security sector reform); the exclusion of these crimes from general amnesties and statutes of limitations; education that fosters gender equality; and programmes to ensure that women, including those who become pregnant as a result of rape, have the information, support and services they need, including access to emergency contraception and measures for the safe termination of pregnancies. In these efforts,

particular attention should be paid to groups that face additional barriers to justice such as ethnic or religious minorities, women in rural or remote areas, those living with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and women and children associated with armed groups;

(c) To give due consideration to recognizing conflict-related sexual violence as a form of persecution that may serve as grounds for refugee status, in the light of its use as a tactic to induce displacement;

(d) To ensure that all refugee-receiving countries provide information on the services available to sexual violence survivors, ensure sustainable psychosocial support and provide survivors with the option to document their cases for future accountability processes;

(e) To support the training of journalists as part of a broader strategy to ensure that the media, including both traditional and new/social media, is not used for incitement to violence, and to foster safe and ethical reporting on sexual violence;

(f) To include in government protocols the specific and distinct needs of female and male victims of sexual violence, and train health-care providers on how to respond to survivors of any age or sex, noting that male and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex victims should be included within the scope of protection provided under national law;

(g) To improve conviction rates for crimes of sexual violence by integrating legal support options with medical and psychosocial care and improving the reach of these services in conflict-affected areas, as well as removing the barriers to reporting by providing free treatment and medical certificates and ending the practice of mandatory police reporting as a precondition to access to care;

(h) To continue to draw upon existing rosters of professionals trained in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence in order to ensure appropriate and timely documentation and investigation of these crimes;

(i) To ensure that gender capacity is included in ceasefire monitoring and verification arrangements and teams, noting that grave violations such as conflict-related sexual violence should be considered to be a breach of ceasefire;

(j) To call upon mediators to include gender and conflict-related sexual violence expertise as part of their mediation support teams;

(k) To integrate gender analysis and training into national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, including resocialization and reintegration initiatives to mitigate the threat of sexual and gender-based violence, and to ensure that psychosocial interventions reach ex-combatants, given the rise in domestic and other violence that follows demobilization in many settings;

(l) To ensure that regional bodies enhance cooperation in information and documentation, the training of security forces, extradition and legal assistance and enhancing public awareness to combat conflict-related sexual violence;

(m) To train all peacekeeping personnel on gender sensitivity, sexual exploitation and abuse prevention and addressing conflict-related sexual violence as a mandatory component of predeployment training, and to ensure that this consideration is integrated into the performance and operational readiness standards against which troops are assessed;

(n) To support the engagement of religious leaders, paying particular attention to amplifying the voices of women, with the objective of curbing violent extremism, preventing the justification of sexual or other violence on religious grounds and addressing the stigmatization suffered by survivors of sexual violence.

92. I urge Member States to draw upon the expertise of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, to support them in building the capacity of civilian and military justice systems, as part of efforts to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity. I urge donors to ensure sustainable funding for this valuable resource.

93. I urge Member States to support the efforts of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and its Multi-Partner Trust Fund, in particular for the development and implementation of comprehensive national strategies to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

Annex

List of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council

The present annex does not purport to be a comprehensive list of perpetrators, but includes those for whom credible information is available. It should be noted that the names of countries appear only to indicate the locations in which parties are suspected of committing relevant violations.

Parties in the Central African Republic

1. Lord's Resistance Army.
2. Former Séléka coalition.
3. Anti-balaka forces, including associated elements of the armed forces of the Central African Republic.
4. Révolution et justice.
5. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain.

Parties in Côte d'Ivoire

1. Ex-militia groups, including:
 - (a) Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé;
 - (b) Front pour la libération du Grand Ouest;
 - (c) Mouvement ivoirien de libération de l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire;
 - (d) Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest.
2. Ivorian armed forces.*

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The following armed groups:
 - (a) Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain;
 - (b) Allied Democratic Forces — National Army for the Liberation of Uganda;
 - (c) Forces pour la défense du Congo;
 - (d) Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda;
 - (e) Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri/"Colonel" Adirodhu Mbadhu/"Colonel" Kakado;
 - (f) Lord's Resistance Army;
 - (g) Mai Mai Cheka/Nduma Defence for Congo;

* Party has committed itself to adopting measures to address conflict-related sexual violence.

- (h) Mai Mai Kifuafua;
 - (i) Mai Mai Simba Manu;
 - (j) Mai Mai Simba Mangaribi;
 - (k) Mai Mai Simba/Lumumba;
 - (l) Nyatura;
 - (m) Raia Mutomboki/Mulumbu Willy, also known as "Willy Alexandre";
 - (n) Raia Mutomboki/Sadiki Desaba, also known as "Kabazimya".
2. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo.*
 3. Congolese national police.

Parties in Iraq

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Parties in Mali

1. Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad.
2. Ansar Eddine.
3. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest.
4. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.
5. Groupe d'autodéfense Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés.

Parties in Somalia

1. Al-Shabaab.
2. Somali national army.*
3. Somali national police force* and allied militia.
4. Puntland military.

Parties in the Sudan

1. Justice and Equality Movement.
2. Sudanese armed forces.
3. Rapid Support Forces.

Parties in South Sudan

1. Lord's Resistance Army.
2. Justice and Equality Movement.
3. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition.*
4. Sudan People's Liberation Army.*
5. South Sudanese national police.*

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.
2. Other armed groups in contested areas such as Raqqah, Hasakah, Damascus and Rif Dimashq, including:
 - (a) Nusrah Front;
 - (b) Army of Islam;
 - (c) Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis;
 - (d) Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis;
 - (e) Ahrar al-Sham.
3. Government forces, including the Syrian armed forces, intelligence services and pro-Government forces, including the National Defence Forces militia.

Other parties of concern on the agenda of the Security Council

Boko Haram.

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 20 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Earlier today, Hamas, a terrorist organization, claimed responsibility for Monday's heinous terror attack in Jerusalem. As you are aware, just as the Security Council was convening to discuss the situation in the Middle East, a public bus was blown up in the streets of downtown Jerusalem, seriously injuring dozens of Israeli citizens.

As soon as word of the terror attack spread, Hamas wasted no time in praising the attempted murder of men, women and children riding on a bus.

Senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk called it "a wonderful gift" and declared, "This is how our people celebrate martyrs."

This cruel act of violence and the subsequent glorification of terror must be denounced unequivocally.

As the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said in his statement condemning the attack, "Terrorism and violence can never be justified, and the perpetrators of this heinous act must be brought to justice ... It is unacceptable that some have praised this act that will only fuel more hatred and further undermine prospects for peace."

Hamas's confession of responsibility comes shortly after this terror organization was caught red-handed when one of its terror tunnels extending into Israeli territory was exposed.

Hamas has declared its intention to use all means to carry out deadly attacks against Israel. Ignoring the threats of Hamas harms Israelis and Palestinians, and it harms the cause of peace.

While the Secretary-General and his envoys condemn such acts of terror, the Security Council continues to remain silent.

Yesterday, I wrote to you asking you to declare Hamas a terrorist organization and to demand that it be disarmed. Today's claim of responsibility makes these steps even more imperative.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Danny Danon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

